

EMINENT INDIANS

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EMINENT INDIANS

BY

D. B. DHANAPALA .

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PREFACE

These sketches were written (among others) in the course of a journalistic career as routine tasks. The task of bringing them out in book form is Nalanda Publishers', to whom I express my sincere thanks.

D. B. D.

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GANDHI

VALLABHBHAI PATEL

S. RADHAKRISHNAN

JIDDU KRISHNAMURTI

R. K. SHANMUKHAM CHETTY

C. P. RAMASWAMI AIYAR

C. RAJAGOPALACHARIAR

ANANDA K. COOMARASWAMY

AMARANATH JHA

G. VENKATACHALAM

WALPOLA RAHULA

Gandhi



THERE was a time when it could be safely said that next to the Taj Mahal at Agra, Mahatma Gandhi was the greatest advertisement that India ever had had. In fact there is a story of how a confused old English woman on her return from India had boasted of having seen Mahatma Gandhi by moonlight! Anyway that certainly would have been a better sight than the spectacle of beholding the Taj Mahal in a loin cloth! But today the marble splendour of the Taj Mahal has been completely dwarfed by the epic stature of the little Mahatma as he sits cross-legged at his charka spinning the thread of Indian destiny.

People have begun to think of countries in terms of personalities. It may be because of the helpful habit of newspapers "splashing" the news that trickles in from different countries with a face stuck in as an illustration. Or it may be, unconsciously, men have begun to realise that current history is the biography of big men.

Whatever it is, there was a time when we associated Italy with Mussolini; Germany with Hitler; Turkey with Kemal Ataturk. Even today Stalin is Russia and Chiang-Kai-Shek is China. The country unsealed by a countenance calls forth no enthusiasm.

To the bearded peasants of Russia, the beer-fond Cockneys of London, the cowboys of America, and the Kimono-clad sons of the Ris-

ing Sun (that has set), India is simply the land of Gandhi. No other man, Lenin and Ataturk not excepted, has represented to the world a whole nation in the person of one man for so long a space of time as has this puny, God-intoxicated Gujerati Bania, with his loin cloth, his begging-bowl, his goat's milk and his dried dates.

In India itself, for the Hindu, religious by nature, devotional by instinct, to like is to love; to admire is to adore. And at the feet of Gandhi thousands bow as before a sacred image. Boatmen gliding home in lonely waters of Bengal at sundown sing songs in his praise; village damsels of the Deccan garland his portrait to the accompaniment of devotional music. Children collect the dust on which he has trod. Men are crushed to death in mammoth crowds longing for a mere look at him. He has to entrain and detrain at little known level-crossings at moments kept darkly secret in order to avoid the muster of multitudes. Otherwise decent men steal his fountain pen to be venerated as a relic. Once a peasant and his wife, travelled-stained and weary, arrived with a brass pot to fetch water that had cleansed his feet as a sovereign remedy to cure their ailing son who was on his death bed! A peasant devotee of Shripur who had carried the Mahatma's picture for many years on his person went on hunger strike for two days because the jail authorities had removed the portrait from him. This same devotee collected money from the public and has built, in the Mahatma's own life-time, a temple at Shripur, Beguserai, for the daily worship of the new Light of Asia with image and hall complete where a stream of villagers daily offer worship in spite of the embarrassed protests from Gandhi!

In the eventful years to come thousands of books will be, as they have been already and are being, written on the modern miracle of how the gaunt lad who at one time in London tried to make a beast of himself by learning ball-room dancing, eating meat (till a live goat seemed to be bleating inside him) and visiting brothels, developed into a fully-fledged Avatar. People will always wonder how the once mundane winner of many medals — Officers Zulu War Medal — Boer War Medal and Kaiser-i-Hind Gold Medal — became a curious combination of modern Indian equivalents of the Oracle of Delphi of the ancient Greeks, Moses leading the Israelites into the Promised Land and uncrowned Asoka trying to establish an Empire of Righteousness. His autobiography bound in Khadder is found rubbing its rough shoulders with the limp leather of the *Bible*, the *Holy Koran* and the *Bhagwat Gita* in library shelves of the discerning. Thousands at his bidding speed and pest over land and ocean without rest.

Yet this mystic spinner is a queer mixture of epic poetry and stump oratory, the prophet at his boldest and the politician at his funniest. He is the goose who said 'boo' to the greatest empire the world has ever known. He is the David who set forth with the little sling of Satyagraha to fight the Goliath of British Imperialism from whom men fled for they were sore afraid. The World waited to have a fine hearty laugh for David had no sword in his hand. It had to wait thirty years. And at long last it is laughing now — but at Goliath whose helmet of brass over head and coat of mail over the body and the staff of his spear like a weaver's beam were of no avail against this new political weapon that the down-trodden

had always had since the birth of the world but never had before put into practical use. It was an ire-opener that released the worst forms of Imperialistic repression, wrath dripping with the poison of the Borgias and atrocities that shall for ever make bitter the name of England in the minds of India.

The peppery Empire in a temper was at a loss as to how to tackle this mad Hindu visionary who turned round to teach those who ruled in the name of Christ how to practise the Sermon on the Mount. What were they to do with this meek yet terrible man who resented not evil but whosoever smote him on the right cheek turned to him the other also? He lifted not his hand. But a prayerful of pity would be offered for each Imperial outrage. He cared so little for his body that he gave them no hold upon his soul. There was only one thing a decent Empire could do with such a man as practised the Sermon on the Mount, said wise-cracking Will Rogers of America, that is "to put the nut in jail." And to one Jesting Pilate the Roman Empire produced to the derision of the World the British Empire produced quite a legion who not so much as washed their hands. Behind this new Spiritual Scourge of Empire there were thousands who would be delighted to be beaten to pulp without flinching; who would welcome each rebuff without wincing; who would give up wealth and family and profession to walk the narrow path of self-denial, sacrifice and misery, having fath in this man's inner voice, his toothless smile and his prayer.

Only now and then when the many men of rock that one man created out of common clay could bear no more there would be, (handy

ahimsa!) one resounding reflex blow, like a clap of thunder, which showed that these heroes were, after all, of flesh and blood and had also feet of clay. Then would come the puny shocked man "clothed upon with the frailest garment of fleshly incarnation ever known" all remorse and penitence to close shop for ahimsa for a little while—until the next neat opportunity. Then would follow a regular orgy of penance and fasts and purification until the harmless weapon of Ahimsa was once again tested and found strong enough to attack the Phillistine Empire.

What was the secret of this man whose worldly possessions consist of only a pair of sandals, a pocket watch, a pair of spectacles, a loin cloth and an uncouth stick in drawing to him not only the millions of the lowest of the lowly but thousands of princes among men in intellect, heart and mind? What was the fascination they found in what he had to offer—blood and tears, fasts and prayers and long years in gaol? Although they knew that Gandhi was a human being yet they were always prepared to expect a divine message or a supernatural inspiration at the mere touch of his hands.

Every five years or so there was a rumour that Gandhi had become a back-number, that his power had waned; that his force was spent; that he was in the scrap heap. Soon after, there would arise a crisis sent by the Fates, as it were, to show that rumour was merely British wishful thinking and that Gandhi's stature, if it could ever be bigger, had become more enormous.

A phenomenon like Gandhi is possible only in two countries in this world—China and India.

And that too once in a thousand years perhaps. These two lands have venerated the sage from the earliest time, exactly as the Greeks celebrated the athlete, Rome adored the warrior and modern Europe worships woman. Indian civilization particularly was built round the Rishi. This was the one country where greatness was never weighed against gold and power against pelf. There is no instance of the people preferring Barabas to Jesus in the whole course of Indian history. And if Christ had been born in India he certainly would not have been crucified. Not only did India adore the saint, the Hindu put to practical use the spiritual findings of the religious teachers exactly as the Westerner puts into practical use the inventions made by research scientists. Ignoring the much adored teachings of Christ in human behaviour and confining them only to Sabbath days is as absurd as worshipping the electric light in a shrine, but going on with the same old fashioned Kerosene oil lamp in one's home. If the West thinks that Jesus was a fool and his doctrines are not practical, he should not be worshipped. If he is the great Son of God they claim him to be why discard his teachings in dealings between man and man.

All that Gandhi did was to take the great religious teachers at their word and give them a chance to prove they were wiser than modern followers of Christianity. But for the background of a perfect sense of values that India had had Gandhi would not have been possible and perhaps the greatest lesson taught to history might never have happened. Never again will a nation clamour for Empire.

Gandhi came on the scene at a time when after over a century of British rule Indians cared more

for the radio than for religion, more for the loose change in their pockets than for their souls. His saintly sermons on virtue and spiritualised politics acted like hot poultices. And soon he removed the scab of materialism that was fast growing on the festering degeneration and reached the raw flesh.

There was plenty of method in his new madness.

Scientific students of mass psychology tell us that to appeal to the masses there are certain lines which seldom fail. Gandhi, unconsciously but shrewdly enough, as though by instinct, adopted all these methods for his own purposes of redeeming a lost nation.

He gave the masses a symbol, something they could touch, feel and be near to; the charka. Hitler's swastika was not one whit so real, so remunerative. The charka was a symbol with an economic and political message that reached the ears through the tinkle of silver coins in the pocket in every corner of India.

Then he gave the masses something to be proud of: the spiritual heritage of Hindustan, the superiority of the Indian spirit over the English brute force. And if the British official was regarded by the average Indian in latter days as the Roman conqueror was by the ancient Hellenese—as only a masterful barbarian sent by the Fates—it was because Gandhi had taught them for over three decades that the Hindu's hymn was superior to the Briton's bayonet.

While he stirred the imagination by a profitable symbol and gave them courage by a new feeling of importance and self-confidence, he offered them a fresh philosophy of life which

seemed to have all the characteristics of a new revelation. He challenged not only the English rule but also the whole bedrock of English culture and civilization, luxury, comfort, money, machinery. He gave them a fresh pattern for life, a new design for living, drawn from the highest conceptions of idealistic action.

He gave the Indians something to fight for—freedom. He gave them a purpose, an ambition, an ideal without which the soul of a nation would wither. The Indian, in time, came to regard freedom in the building up of the nation as necessary as grammar in the making up of a sentence. A by-product of this dynamic desire was an intense hatred of the British occasioned by stupidities on the Imperial scale which Gandhi refined and canalised to serve the ideal.

All the time Gandhi gave the nation action. Nothing the masses like so much as something to do, excitement that would stir the blood. And he gave them plenty to do—spinning daily, boycotting foreign goods, making swadeshi products, discarding outworn customs and traditions.

This incessant activity drove away the spirit of helplessness that had bent the Indian in two. He stood upright. He began to look the world in the face.

A profound philosopher himself who often gets tied up in his own philosophy, nevertheless, Gandhi was shrewd enough to see that the masses thought in the concrete. All his ideals were circulated in the concrete: uniforms of Khadder, bonfires of foreign goods, rallies of volunteers, giant shows of swadeshi goods, spinning competitions, training centres, ashramas,

schools, long bouts of fasts, hartals, demonstrations, a common language and a flag — and slogans. Plenty of slogans.

And no man had in such abundance the supreme gift of setting a chime of words tinkling in the minds of millions. He coined words and phrases that had the magic power to cure or kill. Slogans flowed from his pen as eggs come out of hens. Swaraj, Ram Raj, Satyagraha, Ahimsa, Khadder, Harijan, Hartal — are these slogans, mantrams or mere neologisms? But these are the words that built up the political stamina of 400 million people in 30 years. But with the same pen point this man of peace can kill an idea in an instant. The moment he referred to the 'Cripp's Offer' as "a post-dated cheque" it was as dead as mutton. Congress decision that followed was spoken of by him as the "Quit India" resolution. In two words he summed up the desire illimitable of forty crores and the bitterness smouldering for thirty years. The phrase hit the nail on the head so hard that a revolution devastated the land no sooner than he was locked up. Reams of newspaper were devoted to the evaluation of Miss Mayo's *Mother India* until Gandhi summed it up in a phrase: "a drain inspector's report". Likewise he can give an epic grandeur to an idea in a couple of words. "The crown of thorns" he called the Presidentship of the Congress when in 1929 he denied for himself the honour and placed it on the head of the rising young Nehru.

How he slowly but surely and methodically changed India is seen by the evolution of the Indian National Congress. When he joined it was nothing but a coterie of the upper classes clad in European costumes bent on securing

better jobs. Step by step it became a not too formidable a body minus the European clothes but merely passing long resolutions until the momentous Amritsar Congress Sessions when Gandhi saw his chance to change its ideals, make a break with the past—and prepare the nation for full martyrdom. Today it has become the most powerful political party in the world.

He told them it was good to be free. He also gave them the guts to be free.

One does not use the butcher's scales to weigh gold. In the case of men like Gandhi ordinary standards are far too crude in considering his actions and reactions, his ideals and ideas.

There is something odd about anything absolutely new, whether in fashions or philosophy. Most of Gandhi's ideas invariably had a certain tinge of the grotesque. They sounded absurd, childish, funny. The very thought of fasting for political purposes would have made lizards laugh. We associated stubborn refusal of food with childhood when by subtle blackmailing of a fond mother anxious to see a chubby child we scored our point. But here was a toothless old man trying the same dodge in the twentieth century against Britannia who cared a hang! The attempt to change the heart of the British lion with common salt on its tail seemed as effective as the crow dirting the gopuram of the Madura Minakshi temple to coerce the Brahmins to open the doors to untouchables. Satyagraha or soul force seemed to have as much a chance against a race of hardened shop-keepers armed with the worst forms of murderous weapons the brain of man could invent as prayers of a millipede lying on the track of the

oncoming train would have had on the Punjab Mail. His own uniform of a loin cloth seemed burlesque fancy dress fit for comic opera.

But Gandhi for all his seeming crankiness is no mere crank. What, to begin with, seemed political stunts turn out to be essential religious scruples. What seemed folly turn out to be fantastic faith. The sincerity and the simplicity with which he practises his follies astounds the millions and puts to shame his bitterest enemies. Moral superiority cows down armed might.

If man on earth ever performed miracles this man's name, like Abu Ben Adhem's, should lead the rest. Once for some days two continents all agog had their thumb on the weakening pulse of this frail little man in an Indian prison lying under a mango tree, which has since become sacred, going on hunger strike in obedience to what Socrates would have called his 'daemon', to cure the canker of untouchability in India. Wise men thought it was going to be sheerest suicide. But his fast achieved in one day what social reformers could not have in many centuries and conferences in many cycles. Age-old customs were cast away as it were in the twinkling of an eye. Orthodox citadels protected by the sacred thread that had held sway even in spite of Gotama's onslaught twenty five centuries ago had to surrender.

He shocks social conscience into action as much as he shocks Britain into better behaviour by a perfect sense of timing. There is tense drama in his quick moves. There is the stance of the well-graced actor in his exits and entrances on the political scene.

No politician in any part of the World could have suffered one tenth of his failures and cheerfully admitted them for the good of his soul as he has done and had a second look-in. But the stature of this sack-cloth prince among politicians became more colossal with each defeat. When the Bardoli campaign was working out so well that it seemed too good to be true he called it off because of riots at Chauri Chaura. But he bided his time, keeping himself in the background, a mere spectator, until 1928 when the Congress split into two camps; one for Dominion Status and the other for complete Independence. At that psychological moment the well-graced actor stepped on to the stage and affected a compromise: that it would be Independence if Dominion Status was not given within a year. The time was ripe for Civil Disobedience.

He is shrewd as he is saintly; as simple as he is subtle. The moments he chooses always become momentous.

Although he takes advantage of his opportunity he has never taken advantage of his opponent. An inborn chivalry spurns what might appear to be a stab in the back. Despite Mrs. Besant's urging he refused to bargain with Britain during the World War I. Likewise during the World War II he refused to embarrass the foe.

And he always treated his opponent as a gentleman. He was always ready to believe. There was something naive and simple in the Babes-in-the-wood faith he had in his adversary. During the Bardoli No Tax Campaign the then faithful follower, Mr. M. A. Jinnah, suggested to him that Government might plant agents to start a riot. He was shocked. He refused to.

believe that the Raj would stoop to such a thing. Even when it was apparent on investigation that plain clothed policemen first started the riots in Chauri Chaura he would rather not believe it possible! The Gandhi-Irwin Pact was signed with implicit faith in the good intentions of the Viceroy and throwing away thereby a glorious opportunity. Although all India put no trust in the British Government, the gentleman's word of the Viceroy, the Seeker after Truth accepted without reserve and sealed the Pact with his signature.

We shall not read the history of India of our own times for there is an abominable convention that what they call real history is never written until time makes it not worth reading. But when it is written the future generations will learn that one of the greatest events of the twentieth century in Indian history was the Indian Revolution that did not take place in the year 1931.

To me, that episode is one of the most dazzling in Gandhi's career — this half-naked fakir striding up the steps of the Viceregal Palace to talk terms of peace to the intense chagrin of Winston Churchill. It was the more dazzling because of the sheer lack of pomp or grandeur. In that city of ancient Delhi, which had seen so many grim battles and bloody sights of horror in the past, once again two antagonists — the long, lean Lord Irwin and the shrunken sage, Gandhi — made history. It was in the strangest of ways they fought the verbal battle — the Viceroy dining off Dresden china in all the glory of the chief representative of the King Emperor and the Indian gulping down dates with milk from his beggar's bowl. Here indeed was a

study in contrasts not only in the methods of this strange new battle at Delhi and the manner it was fought but also in the results. The boldness of the contrasts heightened the picturesqueness of the scene and the lack of rigid formalities added a touch of human charm to the picture, as the numerous wind-wearied minarets of undying Delhi looked on overhead, and the diehards caterwauled in England across the sea.

There are hundreds of Sadhus in India, as simple, as honest, as Truth-loving and as self-denying. But no other man in the whole world has established, what Mr. K. M. Munshi calls a "Gandhian Empire." He rules over this vast domain with veritable princes among men who have been drawn to him by the magic of his personality. They prefer the martyrdoms he offers to the money the British offers; the nimbi of heroism that is his gift to the Knighthood that is the Government's bribe. His smile is the prize they work for. He cared not if the British Raj governed the country; he created a vast fabric of Ram Raj of his own and ruled over it with a hierarchy of heroes. They remind one of Plato's philosopher-Kings, specially trained for the selfless work of a nation. The Gandhian Empire, manned by princes among men, is unparalleled in history. Though he is world's biggest political "boss" he has no organised Secretariat, no army of clerks, no publicity agents, no chuckers-out, no stooges, no pomp and ceremony of any sort. The capital of the British Raj is New Delhi; but Gandhi carries on his back, like the tortoise, the capital of Ram Raj wherever he goes. The lack of formality and easy access to him he never denies makes his life perhaps the most miserable on earth. There is

no time of his own. The public eye is on him as he sleeps, as he eats, as he walks, as he prays, as he fasts. And he has developed a pattern of life that excludes the adoring multitudes nowhere. He snatches sleep in motor-cars or railway carriages or even in his study; he prays at meetings; he spins as he listens and he spins as he talks.

Life at his ashrama is one long tale of hard physical work and plain wholesome food. There is no place for the luxury-loving and the comfort-craving, however big, however rich. Each one, except the children, have to earn one's livelihood with the sweat of the brow. Here is plain living and high thinking with a vengeance.

A gigantic apocryph has grown round the Mahatmatic technique of this busy hermit—"boss" who knows no difference between the great and the small, the trivial and the tremendous.

In the middle of the Gandhi-Irwin negotiations he stopped that until an impounded cow was returned to the owner! He once stopped his rule over the Gandhian Empire to lead a blind woman out of the Ashrama. He would sometimes light the fire, prepare the coffee and take the tray (covered with a Khadder napkin) to the bedside of a sick youth. When the outer edge of his regalia of a loin cloth tore he wore it the other way about rather than change. When he visited Shantiniketan Tagore ushered him into a resplendent chamber with masses of flowers and rich hangings fit for an Emperor. The following morning when the Poet paid a courtesy call he found to his horror all the artistic adornments all higgledy-piggledy, vases full of flowers and ferns pushed into

a far away corner, the bed taken out on the terrace and the whole room full of spinning wheels and giant files! Gandhi's sense of beauty is only for the spiritual and not for the physical. But once finding Nandalal Bose, the great artist, painting, he too sketched a temple, God Shiva, a cupid and a farmer in a student's autograph book and showed it to the artist saying: "You are not the only artist. I too know something of art." An American offered Rs. 20,000 for this sketch to Mr. Amarnath Chakrawarthy, the owner, to be met with a stern refusal. In the middle of a political crisis when the smallest Congressman had no time to think of anything he sent word to Nehru that his little daughter Indira had taken on weight! When he lost his Parker pen in Madras (pinched by some devotee) he vowed never to use a fountain pen again. Once in Madras he escaped from the Hindi Prachar Camp and walked by himself along the road, got into a bus to the great shock of the passengers and alighted after about a mile ride just to feel what it was like travelling in a bus.

While in the high seas on the Rajputana, travelling as the sole representative of Congress to the Round Table Conference in London, he discovered that his retinue had a pile of imposing suit cases. "We are the representatives of the poorest country in the world; we have no right to go about with costly suit cases", he chided them. And from Aden he promptly sent back to Bombay seven suit cases and cabin trunks. As he sits cross-legged he has the mannerism of softly rubbing the left ankle with his right hand. An English soldier once shouted "Coolie" to him. Gandhi picked up the Tommy's suit cases and took them to the train.

His sense of humour is like a razor blade and sometimes there is something Shavian in his wit. On his return from Buckingham Palace while in London to attend the Round Table Conference someone referred to Gandhi's scanty dress for a visit to the Palace. With a twinkle he replied: "The King had enough on for us both." When questioned why he once went to Shantiniketan he replied: "To descend from my heights and shed my Mahatmaship." The Poet in welcoming the Sage said: "Shantiniketan the ever young queen of our hearts welcomes you," "So", said Gandhi "there is hope even for the toothless old man." Asked by an English student why Gandhi was "so uncharitable to those who drink" he replied: "Because I am charitable to those who suffer from the effects of the curse." When asked by Bernard Shaw whether the Round Table Conference tried his patience he replied: "The flood of oratory is enough to stem any tide of Swaraj." Asked by a friend what was in the way of Swaraj he replied: "If we Indians could only spit in unison we could form a puddle big enough to drown three hundred thousand Englishmen."

The news value of Gandhi to the journalist is immeasurable. To the editor, the reporter, the free-lance, the litterateur, he is a veritable treasure-trove. If a dog bites a man it is not news: if a man bites a dog it is hot news — so goes the journalistic maxim. In the case of Gandhi "stories" it is as though the man is always biting the dog. The unusual is always the usual with him. He is always displayed in newspapers the whole world over in the front page. With the journalist's black art of Gutenberg and Caxton this faded fakir has impressed his personality on the face of

the world like a seal in wax. Gandhi himself knows the value of a good Press and world-wide publicity. To the press-photographer he always has a smile like a crack in good porcelain. To the whole tribe of journalists he shows pleasing good humour under very trying circumstances. Although the outer man might have a senile smile for the press-photographer and the celebrity-hunter, yet a general melancholia pervades the inner nature of Gandhi. His eyes dimmed with an eager misery, his mouth drooping with suffering, he is the world's sorrow-fiend. His very voice has a soft huskiness reminding one of a recent pain; his laughter has the sudden brevity of a wound. This is the outcome of an infinite capacity for suffering, of strained enthusiasms and a quest after things beyond the last blue range of hills. For, his is an eternal search for hidden beauty of the spirit that the eye can never see, for golden cities that he will never find.

There is no solace on earth for such men as Gandhi. He is the eternal seeker. In such a search there is no content and quiet and peace of mind and bank-balances. There is only the endless road before and the biting wind behind. No doubt he will have a few forced nights of peace in a prisoner's cell now and then when the storms he has created are raging high. But the first next burst of fair weather will see him taking his staff and following the long, long trail.

He belongs to that dynasty of sack-cloth princes, born in a country once in a thousand years — the tribe of Leo Tolstoy, Giodorno Bruno, St. Francis of Assisi. He would like to shatter this sorry scheme of things. And then,

sitting on a green knoll apart, cross legged, he would remake it nearer his heart's desire.

He will be a world in which machinery will have no place. The handloom will supply our cloth. We will ride bare back to the next town instead of rushing in a motor-car. And our money will have to be tied up in a sock instead of being kept in a bank!

But who knows—we might be happier in such a world. Who knows!

Jawaharlal Nehru



TALL in stature—like a father's secret ambition for his son. Dignified but not stilted in bearing—like a song that has roused a nation. Simple and yet vigorous in manner—like the prose style of a modern master. Brave, vibrant eyes which remind one vaguely of momentous moments. A sad, tired smile. A face quivering with impatience—like a prophecy awaiting fulfilment. And a scintillating personality every pore alive with character.

See him on a platform before a large crowd with the light falling softly on his face from a side. And you think of him as some kind of strange precis in personality of a whole people. Here, you imagine, is a brilliant summary in human form of the desirable desires, unsentimental sentiment and longings of four hundred million souls. As he speaks you know he is not a Demosthenes in a *Dhoti*, but the unvoluminous voice has in it the quiet authority of a born ruler and can, at times, roll like a clap of thunder echoing through the open countryside.

Jawaharlal Nehru was born great. He achieved greatness. And he has borne more greatness than most shoulders can bear.

As a general rule, asininity is the lot a great name assigns to the offering under its shade. And rarely does a man receive as a legacy, along

with the family fortune and the ancestral home, that magic essence of personality that made the paternal name resound throughout a land.

It is doubtful whether, without the momentum of Motilal Nehru's name, Jawaharlal would have roared himself to fame at an age which might be described by that subtle phrase "while still a young man." The Favourite Jewel (Jawaharlal) of the Canal (Nehru) had what is called "background." The name stood for an illustrious clan of Kashmiris who had descended from the country of the canals and dominated the Moghul Court at Delhi by their scholarship in Sanskrit and Persian and their cultivated courtesy of old-world Urdu culture. With the snuffing out of the mock splendour of Bahadur Shah the clan shone with greater brilliance in the Law Courts of the British Raj elsewhere until the triumphant tribe produced Motilal, that delightful old pagan, who became half myth half man during his own lifetime, so great was his fame.

When India stood gazing in silent wonder at the culture and civilization of the Briton, Motilal lived in a blaze of Western splendour giving banquets with wine flowing freely, living in a mansion lit by (won't you believe it?) electricity all for himself and cooled by an enormous swimming pool that was the talk of the Taluq. He employed English Oxford Graduates as tutors for his only son. It was also whispered that he sent his clothes to Paris for pressings! If he did so he took them there in person for he often went to Europe bent on squandermania and subtle law points and came back each time still more the glass of fashion, his wardrobe well stocked with the latest things from Bond Street. He spurned all the traditional

flapdoodle of orthodox Hindu purification ceremonies for those who had crossed the "black waters" and, what is more, laughed heartily at the purdah system for women. He sent his son to Harrow to hobnob with English aristocratic snobs and Princes of the Houses of Baroda and Kapurthala. His reputation as a lawyer was as fabulous as the fees he charged, Ah! He did himself proud. Even if you had seen Motilal slipping on a banana-skin you would have gone away with the impression that you had seen a remarkable man. With the head of a Roman Senator, the eyes of an eagle and the aspect of a Retort Discourteous he overawed his juniors and lorded it over his peers.

However illustrious a name he bore, Jawaharlal would have remained a Favourite Jewel only in name had he not had the greatness in him to be fascinated by Trevelyan's *Accounts of Garibaldi in Italy* and to dream of similar gallant fights for freedom in India while yet at Harrow.

After leaving Cambridge, when he came home a Barrister and joined Mrs. Besant's Home Rule League, the magnificent Moderate's only son showed the first inklings of extremism.

A lesser man would have succumbed to the Liberal laws of his famous father, who was "moderate in everything except his generosity," and would have settled down to an even tenor of life and in course of time became respectable, dull and fat—all in enormous proportions—like most people favoured of fortunes. But it was the son that changed the father. Little by little, with never a hint of impatience, always in the friendliest terms, he wrought a conversion that amazed those who knew Motilal at his prime. Every son knows how best to tackle his own

father and no son knew his father better—his strong passions, hates and loves, his tremendous pride and will, his strong friendships and extravagant generosity. And as the evening shadows lengthened round Motilal's life he became a disciple of the great son.

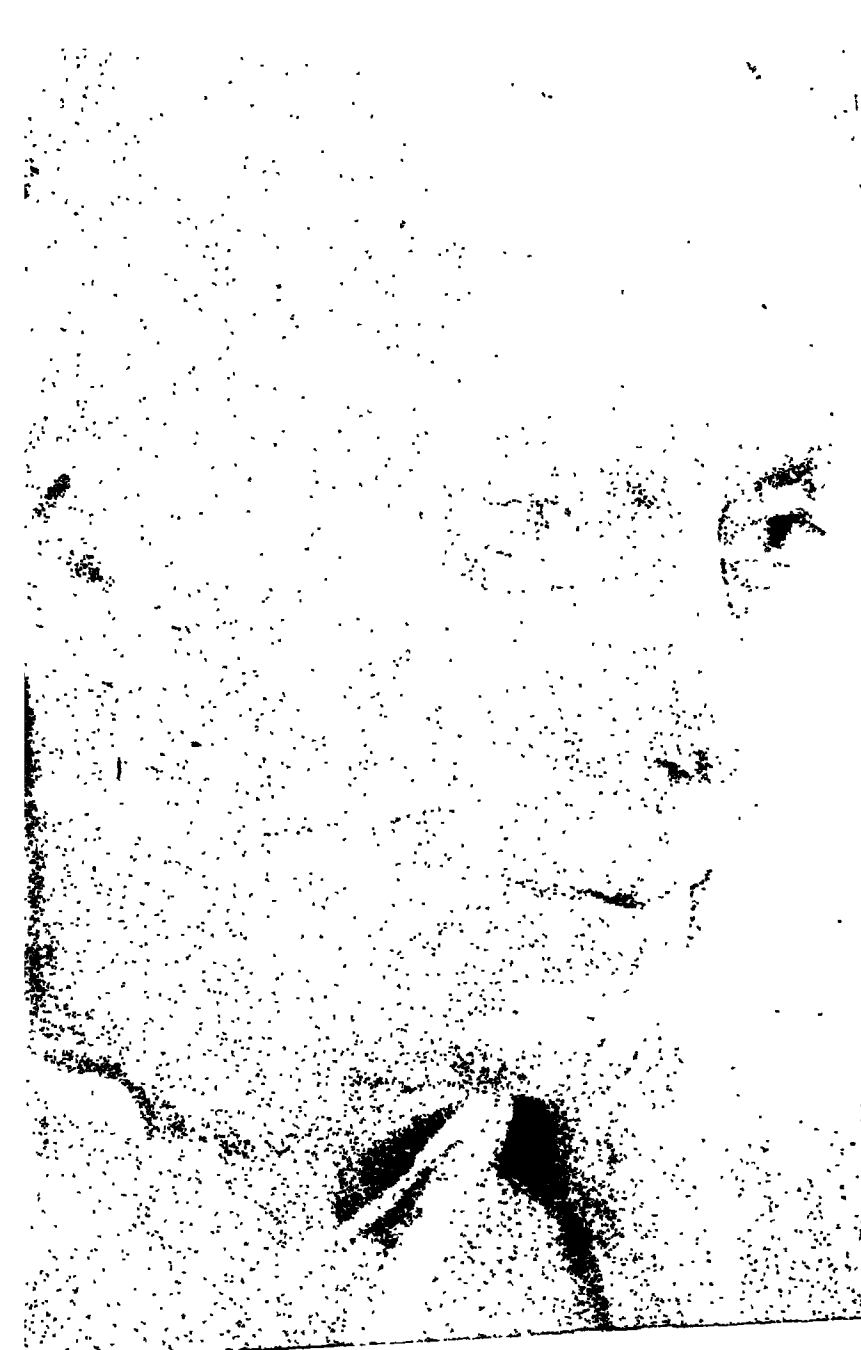
Jawaharlal on his return from England went on a discovery of India and of himself. He wandered in the remote hamlets of Oudh, in the scorching sun of Northern India summers until he developed a rich tan to the intense chagrin of Government spies who had been assigned to dog his steps. The peasants lifted his invisible veil of shyness. How could he be shy of these poor unsophisticated people who looked up to him, in all their piteous condition, as their new saviour? He talked to them as man to man, what he had in his mind in a chatty, personal way. He found, to his amazement, the down-trodden Kisan beginning to walk straighter with his head held high. This was a revelation not only of the peasant but of himself. The simple Kisans made a leader of the shy youth, willy nilly, and gave him the courage to make his first political speech at Allahabad and to be kissed in public by way of congratulations by Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru!

As Mayor of Allahabad, Secretary of the Home Rule League and Secretary of the Provincial Congress Committee Jawaharlal proved to himself and to his friends that he was no mere visionary talking in the air but a man with the grit to handle routine jobs with an efficiency unknown to political figures at the time. And by the time the delicately nurtured youth first went to prison trailing his aged father behind him in 1921 Jawaharlal was known in some vague way as the "the coming man." But during the first

non-co-operation movement he, at the best, was considered a young uncontrollable cub trying to teach his grandmother to suck eggs. Every-time the Moderates thought of the handsome scion of the Nehrus they felt like calling a Policeman.

After suspension of the movement by Gandhi in 1922 to the consternation of Nehru the Congress became a cockpit of communities. The sacred cow of the Hindus was charging fiercely at the annoying drums of the Muslims. Mahatma Gandhi, turning his meagre back on all this unseemly show, was quietly delivering brief little sermons on Truth and Ahimsa to the disciples at Sabarmati. It looked as if Indian nationalism had gone into a coma from which there was no hope of its being roused. Jawaharlal was wandering in Europe on a holiday as a kind of escape from a sense of frustration. And quietly flowed the Ganges through the verdent Indian plains.

But soon India was given a thundering kick in the pants. Lord Birkenhead appointed the all-white Simon Commission in 1927. This challenge was too much even for a Liberal like Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru who made a stirring call to arms. It was the first stirring of the forest leaves. The storm was approaching. But India like a grand old aunt whose dignity and vanity had been hurt, had been excited to the point of comic hysteria, sputtering and stuttering, by the time Jawaharlal arrived in Colombo leaving his father in Europe and took the Talaimannar train unrecognised. Astute politicians had been making dramatic gestures, as if meaning fearful things. Nationalist newspapers had been making noises full of sound and fury for months. But nobody seemed to know exactly what to do.





GANDHI

It was a new Nehru, with a broader outlook, a keener edge to adventure, a greater student of international affairs that crossed the Palk's Strait with pursed lips. It was like Lenin coming into Russia on the outbreak of the Revolution to take charge.

And at the Congress session at Madras, presided over by the late Dr. Ansari, he moved the historic Resolution of Independence. He took the word clean out of the mouth of a nation. One kick in the pants was answered with another kick in the pants. The public palate for sudden leadership was served with a dash of pepper by this ruthless idealist hot from a visit to Red Russia. The magical, seditious word "Independence" had been uttered as an answer to a challenge. And it sounded like exotic music that fascinated the nation which, awakened from its sleep, raised its hood and began to dance to the tune of the new charmer. Jawaharlal Nehru became a name. He captured the heart of India by the dare-devilish dash of his name and the damascene nerve of his deeds. As though he was some kind of Pied Piper and they were little children people followed him— young men and women with poetry prowling about their hearts, respectable men complete with paunches, black umbrellas and bank balances. They did not care to find out where he was leading them.

Yet the Moderates who held the reins of the Congress had not paid much attention to the Independent Resolution. They thought of it only as a good retort to a challenge and purely academic in interest—like the batch of other resolutions that Nehru moved at the same session on War Danger and Imperialism. They swallowed it like a quack's pill and hoped that if it

would not do much good it would not do much harm either. Even Gandhi himself disliked it. The very utmost they could see was Dominion Status.

And it might have become only an academic resolution if Nehru had not entrenched himself as the Secretary of the Congress that year. The resolution, any way, had been accepted. If others did not take it seriously, he did! Within the year he had done enough mischief in the country that by 1929 he had become somebody to be reckoned with—a new outlook, a new force against which the surprised Moderates mustered strong.

In 1929 when the Calcutta Congress met, presided over by Motilal Nehru, Jawaharlal was the star performer. Those who had considered him an impertinent pup for years listened to him as though he was Polonius and Nestor rolled into one. After long parleys and discussions the Calcutta Congress passed a resolution to the effect that while adhering to the Madras Resolution of the previous year, Congress was prepared to accept Dominion Status for India if granted within a year, failing which it would revive non-violent non-co-operation and in the meanwhile carry on propaganda for independence.

This was a face-saving device for the Moderates brought about by Gandhi himself who by now began to see with the far-seeing eyes of Nehru. Nobody ever imagined that Dominion Status would be delivered to order within a year, the right side up. Jawaharlal Nehru had finally captured the Congress.

The supreme rebel, with astounding self-confidence, believed that if ever you desired to

achieve anything for the nation, there was nothing better to try to achieve than the impossible. In fact he did not believe in impossibilities. He preferred to believe in miracles. He would refer you to the French and Russian revolutions. Were they not miracles? He delighted in warfare and sometimes went to the length of talking to foreign correspondents about a national army! Having no ambitions for himself, he had no limit to his ambitions for his country.

He had the impatience of the Roman conqueror and the defiance of the leonine scion. The outer garments might have been of khadder but the under garments seemed to be of beaten gold. Behind the immaculate khadder one always saw the born aristocrat.

Jawaharlal Nehru had none of those qualities that went to make a good politician. As a matter of fact, the odds were all against him. He was impatient; hated compromises, the proudest medals of the life political; was brutally frank; had more sincerity than tact, more earnestness than diplomacy. A correspondence course would have taught any man more of statesmanship than he knew!

But India believed in him despite these shortcomings. For he was not merely a person, he was an idea, an ideal. The idea was Indian determination. He was the personified ideal in which India had begun to believe.

He was the French song 'La Marseillaise' in flesh and blood on Indian soil.

Above all, he was the man of action. He was of the swift, the strong, the undaunted that should yet make a worn out nation glad. His sincerity, honesty, staggered one in a world where mean men pinched and higgled and cheated.

Jawaharlal Nehru became the politician-sheikh of India by suddenly capturing the hearts of young India. No man other than Gandhi himself had stirred the imagination of India as did this aristocrat from Allahabad. The child-like faith and confidence showered on the then young Nehru by a whole nation staggered one. It was not politics; it was unadulterated idolatry. Greatness could not be thrust on a man with a greater vengeance. At all hours of the day crowds would come to "Ananda Bhavan" to see the new leader, giving inmates no peace.

It was Mahatma Gandhi himself who first recognised that the fire-brand from Allahabad had become the idol of young India when, denying for himself the "crown of thorns" that had been offered, he graciously placed it on the younger Nehru. It was a man who had definitely arrived that rode on the white charger to the Congress rostrum at Lahore in 1929.

For a little while this sudden adoration of the multitudes went to his head. He was, after all, human. But the family who adored him would not help to spoil him. By good-humoured raillery they would bring him back to earth from the clouds. "Oh! Jewel of India, pass me the sugar," his wife would tease him, using the pompous, flowery words of public addresses. "Oh! Embodiment of Sacrifice, your shaving water is ready," a sister would remind him. Even little Indira did not spare him. This light-hearted treatment gave him a sense of perspective and balance.

But the true achievement of greatness of this Supreme Rebel was his overcoming his own tempestuous, uncompromising war-like nature

and taming it for the service of the nation. While losing nothing of his vitality and force he schooled himself to curb his impatience. He made himself a statesman against his own grain.

It was another Nehru who presided over the Congress Sessions at Lucknow in 1936, a crucial year in Indian politics—just before the introduction of new constitution. His calm statesmanship, displaying a cool head but always on the alert showed itself best during the discussions over the undecided question: to accept or not to accept office. Personally he was against acceptance of office. But he clarified the issue and left it entirely to the Congress. He was the servant; it was the master. Then again when the question of the national anthem “Vande mataram” came up before the All-India Congress Committee on another occasion, the new statesman advocated the compromise of dropping the last stanza which conjured up visions of Durga, Lakshmi and Saraswathi whom the Muslims had no wish to worship. Even though he was out and out a Socialist he trained himself to put the Congress and not his creed first in his pleading for a new social order from the ashes of the old. First things first. With the introduction of the new Constitution he was re-elected because India simply could not do without him. And I believe no other man in India could have managed that first election campaign as did Nehru. He rose to the height of Kamal Pasha as a general and insisted on discipline in working up the campaign. Those who erred were severely punished. The whirlwind campaign by rail, car, and aeroplane would have made an invalid of a lesser man. But this man won through. The Congress capture of eleven Provinces achieved by this new Napoleon of

of India. was the victory of personality. It was a queer election campaign in which voters had to walk miles on foot to vote, spend their own money and, through it all, resist the temptations of the rivals in regard to comfort and convenience.

From the day he moved his Independence Resolution to this, Jawaharlal, with the motive power of Gandhi behind him, has moulded the Congress. Gandhi was the keeper of the conscience; but it was Nehru who was the architect. Gandhi gave inspiration; he showed the path. Strategy was Gandhij's; but the tactics were Nehru's. He became the Foreign Minister all but in name in the Gandhian Empire. He became the Guru of Gandhi himself in international affairs and foreign policy. His personality began oozing out and spreading throughout Asia. He ceased to be a mere national figure; became an international idol. All suppressed countries appealed to him for help. He became a citizen of the world.

Jawaharlal Nehru is the latest model de luxe of the Indian politician. He is none of your old model politicians, waving their arms in windmill fashion, hacking savagely left and right the arguments of an opponent. Gifted with a keen intellect he is skilful in debate, cutting clean and straight. He often kills an argument giving you the idea not of slaughter but of wilful suicide of the victim.

Most Indian politicians I have met treat you as Gladstone treated Queen Victoria—like a public meeting. "We met Bepin Chandra Pal in one of our sitting rooms," writes Nehru himself dealing with his Cambridge days. "There were only a dozen of us present but he thundered at us as if he was addressing a mass meeting of ten

thousand." Nehru treats a public meeting like a private individual. He takes you as his equal, puts you at your ease. Cogent and forcible, he has no frills and oratorical flashes and purple patches. Solid commonsense expressed in a commonsense way—that is his magical method. And he is so sincere that you feel it a crime to disagree with him. It is the same style that won the hearts of the Kisan in his roving to discover India in the early days.

Once Jawaharlal Nehru presided at a lecture of an important professor with plenty of prose in his soul. The pedant began by criticising the programme of the Indian National Congress as unpractical and visionary. Then he criticised the Liberal demand for Dominion Status. Next he went on to say that he himself could offer no solution to the problems as he could not decide what exactly one should do, and ended up with a peroration imploring politicians in general to face facts.

Jawaharlal Nehru rose. There was electricity in the air. A cough could be heard like the misfiring of a motor-car.

"As I listened to my friend," said Jawaharlal Nehru, with a smile hovering round the corners of his mouth, "I was reminded of a certain well-meaning Greek teacher who had a theory that one could never be certain of what one should do. He had many honest disciples. But one day the philosopher happened to get into a bog by some mischance. There he was, stuck deep in the mud, slowly sinking, when his greatest disciple happened to come on the scene. Immediately the disciple began to weigh the pros and cons and entered into a long discussion with himself whether he should drag out his teacher or not.

At last he came to the wonderful conclusion—that he could not come to a conclusion!”

The audience was seized with a sudden fit of laughter. The dry smile, all of a sudden left Nehru's face, like a wintry sunset. His mouth twitched.

“We politicians who have to face hard, cold facts, day in day out, cannot afford the luxury of being impractical and visionary. We leave that to professors and arm-chair philosophers.”

I saw the face of the professor wriggling like that of a man committing suicide wilfully.

India is a land overflowing with religion and God. Mahatma Gandhi's fame is based mostly on foundations of prayers. Jawaharlal Nehru, the man without a god or a prayer, is an exception as a hero. Spiritual India of timid ash-covered fakirs and peace-pervading Vedic philosophy shows something akin to the cripple's admiration of the athlete in adoring this godless paladin of politics whose personality has cut itself into the heart of the masses like a hot knife into a block of butter.

“I have become a queer mixture of the East and West, out of place everywhere, at home nowhere,” he wrote in his autobiography. Anybody who writes on Nehru must needs trot out this sentence to indicate his position in India. Nothing could be farther from the truth. When a great man undervalues himself that does not become the criterion. Gandhi is always claiming a back-numberhood which India refuses to give him. For he is always thrust on to the forefront of battle.

We either admire what we ourselves are or what we wish to become. And if India adores

the citizen of the world who is a combination of the East and the West: that is what the nation itself is today. Jawaharlal went to England. But England for quite a long time has been with us. We are as much a product of the East and the West as Nehru. And if he finds himself at home nowhere that is exactly what India as a nation feels at this critical time. He is typical of India. The Nation's tragedy becomes his own. He will feel at home only when India is free and has adjusted herself to the new circumstances and fashioned her own life according to her desires. Right through British Rule India was an alien in her own land; an alien in foreign lands, at home nowhere. But Nehru has won self-respect for India more than any other man save Gandhi.

He is the man who cannot be suppressed. Every time he is imprisoned yet another of those tremendous books comes out of the Press. He earns his living in gaol and spends all he gets on the country when set free. When the Viceroy's lock him up, he collects his thoughts, weighs and considers, and writes down in delightful unadorned but vivid prose what passes in the mind of the best citizen of the world we have with us.

The Autobiography did more propaganda for India abroad than two decades of broadcasting might have done. *Glimpses of World History* gave us for the first time a bird's eye view of the past of the world with India as the bird. A master of written English prose as Srinivasa Sastri was of spoken English, his printed word has a charm and magic difficult to analyse.

He likes poetry, friends, writing letters, climbing mountains, gazing at good pictures, seeing Indian dancing, reading books by the hundred,

light-hearted banter, laughing at himself, looking at himself as others see him, swimming and standing on his head.

Once in Kashmir he went on a shikari and shot an antelope which chose to fall down at his feet, wounded to death, with its great big eyes full of tears. Those eyes have haunted him ever since.

He feels like kicking those who cringe and creep before him. He orders them to stand up and walk straight like men.

Soon after he was set free from gaol in 1934 he made a challenging speech at Calcutta. Then occurred the Behar Earthquake. He took the next train to the spot. And for ten days he toiled. When he arrived home he looked so ghastly that Ananda Bhavan folk thought he was a ghost. He straight went to bed for twelve hours. When he woke up the Police were there to arrest him once again !

He likes to watch insects and birds. He once had a little tiff with wasps which had invaded his cell at Dehra Dhun Gaol. He wanted to exterminate the lot. But they put up such a terrific fight that he decided to leave them in peace. Perhaps it was the only battle in which he turned tail.

He hates meanness of any sort, lack of a sense of humour—and bats.

When Gandhi refused the Congress Presidentship and nominated him for the Lahore session he was annoyed. He felt humiliated that he was smuggled in by a trap-door, not even a side entrance. But he put a brave face and swallowed it as a necessary pill.

G. Venkatachalam records how he was beside himself when he beheld the great 2000-year old statue of the Buddha in the forest at Anuradha-

pura. He got a picture of the statue and had it in his cell at Dehra Dhun.

Ela Sen records an incident at an All-India Congress Committee meeting. A member of a Provincial Assembly pointed out to President Jawaharlal that the procedure adopted was not in accordance with that in Provincial Assemblies. Nehru replied: "And why should we bring this House down to the level of your assemblies?"

Discussing porcelain cups with an English businessman Nehru once pointed out British egg cups were too big for Indian eggs. But added: "It would be easier to persuade Indian hens to lay bigger eggs than your producers to make smaller cups for India."

Once a man disputing with him over some question told him: "Sir, there are two sides to a problem." "Yes," came the retort, "but that does not follow you should always be on the wrong side."

He makes a fine picture as he stands in his six foot four of nobility. He is no longer the hope of the Nation. He is the one man in 400 millions who has fulfilled the promise of his youth. What a tribute to his once peppery youth that one day he will take Gandhi's place! Twenty years ago such a statement would have been thought blasphemy. But today it is taken for granted. Which shows the greatness, born with, achieved and thrust upon, of this scintillating personality which has moved millions to new life, given a new life, given a new purpose for existence and designed a visionary pattern for freedom that has come true. He is the modern version of the epic Indian hero—an Arjuna educated at Harrow or a Rama graduated from Cambridge.

Rajendra Prasad



A FIFTY-YEAR old Kayastha from Behar suffering from chronic asthma was elected the President of the Indian National Congress in 1934. The light that lay hidden under the bushel at Patna began shining forth in India with the accession of Babu Rajendra Prasad to the gadi of the greatest political party in the East.

Until then the name of Mr. Prasad had not meant anything to the world at large. As a matter of fact few people knew that such a name ever existed. Even to those few who had heard of the name during the Indian earthquake disaster it brought no thrills. His personality carried with it no vibrations or vitality. Just another of those numerous Prasads that infest all parts of Northern India from whom there is no escape: thus one would have thought and passed on to light another cigarette.

But the name was not so vacuous as one vaguely supposed.

In Congress India political leadership is a task to which many are called but only a few chosen. It demands a tedious apprenticeship—long, arduous, dreary, dull. Before a man comes into the focus of a likely political career at least twenty years of toil and trouble have to smelt his soul into selfless devotion to duty. Purity, Poverty and Perseverance—these are the ascetic exactions from a political leader to prove

that his heart is sincere. And to aspire to be a Congress leader three terms of imprisonment at the least have to be won before any man is taken notice of.

Hundreds of men and women qualify unconsciously for political leadership—unknown and unnoticed—in almost every corner of the Gandhian Empire.

Out of this great mass of suffering heroes destiny picks out now one, now another as occasion demands. The vast majority are not picked out at all. It may be that during a sudden dramatic episode one of these men moves with heroic strides across the scene. The national consciousness seizes upon the figure and glorifies him for the future recognising his immediate present and his longer past.

Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel emerged out of the Bardoli Campaign, a farmer from the plough to be annointed with fame and placed on the unofficial throne of India. Babu Rajendra Prasad emerged out of the Behar earthquake disaster with a halo round his head to drive in triumphal procession through Bori Bundar to Worli to ascend the rostrum of the 1934 Congress session.

A typical Kayastha, undersized in appearance, thin like a sandwich, Babu Rajendra Prasad has none of the vital personal appeal and daredevilish dash that is usually associated with men like Jawaharlal Nehru, Subhas Chandra Bose or Jai Prakash Narain.

In personality he is nearer the flute than the drum; in character nearer the granite than the marble. He carries with him no personal charm that will win him plaudits from foreign

newspaper correspondents or a romantic name that will open for him barred gates of coteries. This lack of polish is due to his struggle in early life.

Culture and polish need leisure and money and contentment at heart.

Being an orphan from early years he did not find life all silk and satin. His brother, Mahendra Prasad (who died in 1934) acted the part of father and brother rolled into one to the family of five children during the later nineties of the last century.

The people of Behar are even today not over fond of education though they lack not shrewd commonsense. Fifty years ago they were noted for their callow contempt of the English alphabet,

But in the year 1893 when a gaunt lad became ephemerally famous by being the first Beharee to top the list in the Entrance Examination of the University of Calcutta the great achievement made the Behar Kayasthas warm with proud wisdom. Wrote the *Hindustan Review* of those days: "The young Rajendra is a brilliant student by all accounts. We wonder what the future has in store for him. We hope he will live to occupy a seat on the Bench of the High Court of his province, and receive the letter of appointment—as did Mr. Justice Chandravarkar at Lahore—when presiding over a session of the National Congress." Which indicates the national ideals and ambitious of the pre-Gandhian Era.

In Calcutta he did not merely cram his books.

He was the founder and life and soul of the Beharee Club where the men that were boys

when he was a boy came and sat with him. He passed his M.A. with a strange brilliancy for a backward Beharee. There is a fine story of the audacious scholar as an examinee. The learned Examiner of the Calcutta University had asked candidates to answer any five out of the seven questions given. Prasad answered all the seven and requested the Examiner to mark any five he pleased!

One cannot live for long on academic fame alone however parochially important. But young Rajendra Prasad went to Mazaffarpur as a schoolmaster not with mere pedantic propensities to his credit for while at College he had organised the first Beharee Youth Conference at Patna in 1906. Teaching young brats what they do not want to learn is at best a dull task. In lonely Muzaffarpur it became extraordinarily weary work for a young man who had sometimes neglected his studies at College delivering seditious speeches in connection with the partition of Bengal.

Perhaps not to let down the *Hindustan Review*, perhaps to bring more grist to the family mill, we find Rajendra Prasad, a few years later, back again in Calcutta and reading law. And by 1911 he is a full-fledged lawyer in the city making a name that brought him and the family money with an abundance that surprised him.

Despite early ideals Rajendra Prasad settled down to lucrative practice in Calcutta and later in Patna and continued the even tenor of his way as thousands of other mediocrities do in all towns the world over. For once his name leapt into the headlines when in 1916 he opposed the reactionary Patna University Bill introduced in

the Imperial Legislative Council by the late Sir Sankaran Nair.

Then he sank into oblivion's lair in Patna once again.

Gokhale, who had the supreme gift of divining greatness cultivated into a useful habit, saw in the rising lawyer a future leader and invited him to join the Servants of India Society. But the duty of replenishing the family treasury he owed the family, particularly his brother who brought up the fatherless boy, made him give up the luxury of being a national hero for the time being.

In 1917 Mahatma Gandhi was arrested in Behar when he visited the Province to inquire into the grievances of the ryots of Champaran. This was a call to the once fiery youth leader of Calcutta. Babu Rajendra Prasad came out of his lawyer's coma of idle ease and worked night and day in the cause of the peasants.

Although the Champaran affair made him a leader popular in Behar he remained rather a dark horse till the Punjab disturbances in 1919. On that occasion he gave up his practice, pledged to break "unrighteous" laws and became the live wire in Congress politics in Behar.

But family ties troubled his conscience. And he wrote to his brother: "It may be ungrateful on my part to leave you in difficulty and embarrassment. But I propose to you to make a sacrifice in the cause of 300 millions."

He had crossed the Rubicon. There was no turning back. From that year to this Babu Rajendra Prasad's life has been spent in the cause of the country. In Behar, he stood for all that is highest in Congress ideals.

But at best he remained a Provincial leader without a peer till 1932 when this sickly man past middle age was elected to preside over the Puri Congress session.

One of the prophecies of the *Hindustan Review* was being fulfilled but there was no letter of appointment from Government as a Justice of the High Court! For he who might have become a Justice of the High Court with ease had already become a gaol bird. The only hitch to the Congress session at Puri was that the President-designate was in jail in connection with the Civil Disobedience Movement!

No sooner than he came out of prison the earthquake shook Behar like a jelly. It was the time for prayer. Then arose the leader as an answer to the prayers. The name of Rajendra Prasad became as it were a rumour—heard everywhere in each nook and corner of vast India.

A poor man with no personality and polish, no dash and devilry, but with a will that astounded a whole nation, the patient suffering from chronic asthma raised more than half the money that the Viceroy of India was able to collect after setting all the wheels of Government and power in motion.

The feat seemed a miracle.

Foodless, sleepless, penniless, the great beggar wandered over the devastated area bringing relief and succour to the thousands that lay scattered almost in pieces in Behar.

This was his crowning achievement. This his great gift to his nation.

The Kayasthas have seldom shown any signs of great leadership. But it is doubtful whether there is any community in India which can

equal them in filling in details and executing minor parts to make up a great scheme. Wonderful in serving they can finish off things like jewellers though they ever fail in originality and intellect to design.

Babu Rajendra Prasad has been a hero but only half a hero in the eyes of India. Though during his tour in Europe in 1928 he came into contact with men like M. Romain Rolland his outlook has always remained essentially Indian uncoloured by foreign influence.

With the exception of Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya almost all the other politicians of India learnt their patriotism in England, not excepting Gandhi himself.

Rajendra Prasad's feeling for the country is home-grown and home-spun.

He attended no foreign universities; he hobnobbed with no English Dukes. He did not even walk out with an English girl pretending to be single while married.

There are leaders who understand the people. But unfortunately the people are unable to understand all of them in return. Babu Rajendra Prasad, more than any other Indian leader, is nearer the peasant in character and temperament and therefore easily understood by him. He is simple. He does not believe in all the flapdoodle of modern civilization. There is a story that once when he was in jail a delegation of British Officials passed his cell. "Obviously a criminal type," said they, going by his appearance! And the man who knows seven languages, has a heart of gold and might have been a Judge of the High Court, merely smiled!

Even though the word "Babu" was given an ugly twist by the British exactly as the word "native," Rajendra Prasad has preferred it to any other epithet.

There is in him an iron independence that laughter cannot curb or derision deter. He is the Indian version of Tennyson's Gallahad who has the strength of ten because his heart is pure. We no longer consider Behar a backwater for we have to reckon with this greatest Boss of Behar barring none—even Gandhi.

The Congress chose widely the Triumvirate that was put in charge of the Congress Ministries when first they accepted office: Sardar Patel for Strength, Abdul Kalam Azad for formal authority, and Rajendra Prasad for purity of heart and mind.

Next to Gandhi he is the most beloved figure, but the name of this half a hero has no vibrations—no thrills. He will never be an inspiration that will make a whole nation stir with undecided opinions. He never took the country by storm. He is no new force that has come into Congress politics. He is the kind of hero that you put by for a rainy day—a saving up in the realms of greatness.

His is heroism without heroics; greatness without glory.

Vallabhbhai Patel



HERE is a man who has stepped out of the pages of Plutarch. In another age and clime one can easily imagine him being banished by the people of Rome in a fit of vehement violence. He seems to be made to be maligned; cut out to be criticised. He has none of the graces of a popular idol of the multitude. He is devoid of the boon of the beatific smile; he is untrained in the trick of the well-timed gesture; he is bereft of the polish of the polite phrase.

We know, in a vague way, that he can smile; but when he smiles we do not know. Invariably he looks like one who has said the last word before battle. He is always ready for a Rubican to cross, to burn his boats behind him and ride rough shod on anybody in his way. There is the ruthlessness of the Russian regime, the finality of a fiat in his attitude. The pugnacity of Bismarck, the cruelty of Bachcha-Sacko and the idealism of Tolstoy seem to mix and mingle in his nature in some curious pattern. In fact he appears to be some kind of strange accident searching for a place to happen, a deadlock on the look-out for a situation to fit into.

Vallabhbhai Patel is the personification of the spirit of Omar Khayam's moving finger that, having writ, passes on. Nor all thy piety nor thy wit shall lure it back to cancel half a line, nor all thy tears wash out a word of it. The moving finger may be his but the momentum

behind it is Gandhi's; the law is Patel's but the language is that of the Indian National Congress.

He is the Chief of Staff of Satyagraha. Gandhi and the Congress conclave within closed doors, enunciate high ideals, visionary schemes, daring campaigns and they disperse. But it is Patel who does the real, thankless job. He keeps everybody in order, putting each man in his place. If one becomes too big for his boots, his is the unpleasant task of giving a kick on his pants. If another shows signs of a swollen head, it is his task to bring him down a peg. He is the purger, the purifier, the man who sends pomposity packing. He is the man whom men would love to hate and perhaps no other man in the Gandhian Empire has been so hated, at one time or another, as Patel by Congressmen themselves. He is the willing cat's paw. He does the dirty jobs,

He speaks very little but listens a great deal. And when he speaks it is a decision for action he announces, a battle cry he utters. Perhaps it takes a long time to persuade him. But once he is persuaded he displays the greater fervour of the convert, the ruthlessness of the fanatic in the new idea. Give him a job of work to do, and see him at it. All the pent up quiet ferocity, the sedate force is released in lightning flashes of preliminary organisation. Then he sits down to the details. Nothing is too small for his eye. He perfects each detail like a jeweller, but never forgets the general design. He drives terror into the hearts of the heretics within the ranks. He who flouts him does so at his peril. And those who err are turned over and scrutinised and thrown away with no compassion. There is no milk of human kindness in his thoroughness.

The willing cat's paw has the strength of the leonine tribe in its defying strokes. The moving finger, having writ, passes on. It is typical of Patel.

The Indian National Congress is sometimes accused of being dictatorial, ruthless and intolerant. It is at Patel that the accusing finger is pointed. For here is a man who, in manner and mien, in word and deed, is an autocrat. But he is an autocrat who obeys other men's orders, carries out other men's plans and voices other men's words. He plays the Dictator in the grand manner but in an impersonal style of his own. He is the general who obeys orders. And woe to them who do not obey him.

Gandhi gave the Congress inspiration. Jawaharlal Nehru broadened its vision and imagination. Rajendra Prasad gave it purity. Sarojini Naidu gave it grace. But it was Vallabhbhai Patel that gave it efficiency and a sense of thoroughness and power. The Congress is contemptuous of titles and honours. But in the case of Patel it makes an exception: he is always the Sardar. Few people could play the autocrat and get so easily away with it. After each little "atrocities" of him when it is scrutinised the patent fairness of the man makes the victim feel thoroughly ashamed of himself and he slinks away like a whipped dog.

In his hands all the mighty men in the land are pawns which he places where he pleases and plays the game for Congress victory. He knows the right man for the right job. He watches and plans and calculates. And he makes swift moves. He is a modern monster with a hundred eyes, each on each of his pawns;

and a hundred ears, each hearing every whisper; and a hundred hands, each busy making moves and counter moves. All India is his province.

After over one and a half centuries of political slavery the fact that such a man of action with unerring insight into men and quick grasp of detail could be produced is in itself enough to take one's breath away. His matching his administrative ability with the Government of India often seemed foolhardy audacity. But he proved his efficiency against these odds every time he was given any job of work.

Gandhi picked him up from the Ahmedabad law library where about thirty years ago he had sat apart sneering at the new spiritual force in Indian politics. He was slow to accept the Gandhian creed. But the first triumph of Gandhi, the Bardoli campaign, was due to the erstwhile sceptic lawyer who had become perhaps the most devout follower of the Mahatma, the perfect instrument, the vehicle supreme of the Master. Before the Government knew what was happening a taluk of 80,000 people had been organised into one compact unified unit which the Raj tried with desperate tricks to break up. But all in vain. They had bargained without the host. From that day to this the Sardar stands first for efficiency of organisation, thoroughness in handling a situation, and mastery in management of big things.

Sardar Patel has what may be called an index-card mind. Everything seems to be indexed and labelled and filed. And when the occasion arrives the impressions secretly pigeon-holed and kept for years play their part in his quick decisions and swift moves. He misses nothing.

Of all the Congress leaders he is the man who has escaped death by inches or seconds. K. M. Munshi relates how hostile elements lay in wait to bump him off at Bhavnagar and sheer luck prevented his death. Communists have attempted to murder him in broad daylight. He revels in risks. He is never so composed as immediately after one of these numerous incidents. These give him the spice of life.

Though he knows how to wield power and keep inveterate rebels in discipline he never craves for power for its own sake. It has to be thrust into his hands. Until his moment arrives he keeps himself in the background. But his is the last word before battle of which he is made the general. At a meeting of the Congress Working Committee at Allahabad in May 1942 in considering the draft of the "Quit India" Resolution, he said: "I have placed myself in the hands of Gandhiji. I feel he is instinctively right—the lead he gives in all critical situations. It is time the door is finally closed after the repeated insults heaped upon us." On the release of the Congress leaders in 1945 when some people had hoped Congress would show a changed attitude the Sardar's voice rang loud and bold: "Not a word of the 'Quit India' resolution could be obliterated or altered. Indeed if anything is to come next it will be 'Quit Asia.'" There was the man of action for you, the moving finger, having writ, passing on.

As a general in the field he knows both strategy and tactics. He knows how to manœuvre as well as how to give crushing blows. His index-card mind does not scruple to make use of personal jealousies or rivalries, weaknesses of individuals

or parties which are carefully recorded in his memory, to outmanoeuvre his opponents. And when he shoots, he shoots to kill.

To millions of Indians brought up on a helpless feeling of inferiority along with their mother's milk he became the symbol of self-confident strength, the champion who could pick up a gauntlet with an astounding audacity and fling it in the face of the challenger. His very exterior suggests a rugged strength that stands no nonsense. The man of thought finds in him no hero battling with ideas. The drowsy are not roused by his eloquent silences. But the nation as a whole worships him. For, he is the general at the critical moment, when the Rubicon has been crossed, the boats burnt. His forearm has the might to bang any door in anybody's face. He alone has the capacity and courage to give back in ahimsa what they get in attack. Indians might not mob him at railway stations, fall over each other to touch his feet. But no Indian is not proud of him. They all have the same feeling for him as a miser has for his money. He might not be their show-piece, to be mounted on a pedestal. If anything they are just a tiny bit ashamed of him, his rough exterior and uncouth manners in an age of Indian politicians educated at Oxford and well versed in the polite pleasantries of drawing rooms. But when the time for battle arrives all India watches with child-like confidence the moves of this political ugly duckling from Bardoli. His power is irresistible. You pay tribute to him because you cannot help it, not because you want to. Your admiration is perfectly under control. He is not the man on whose forehead a girl would put a tilak with her own blood or to see whom a man would risk being crushed to death.

But, if the admiration is given rather grudgingly, it is also taken grudgingly. He is rather impatient of all this flapdoodle of garlands and songs, frenzied crowds wishing just an eyeful of a hero. He cares for the praise or blame of only one man. That man is Gandhi. It is the Mahatma's smile that has made him a dynamic figure stepping out of the pages of Plutarch. As long as Gandhi lives he will have a guide, a counsellor whose very flicker of the eyelids carries a command he understands. But one shudders to think what will happen once he is gone. Will the populace banish him into the wilderness in some frenzy of misunderstanding or will he become the first President of the new United States of India? Who can tell?

Sarojini Naidu



IT WAS an evening in early February 1931, of a peculiarly mild warmth and fragrance, when you could feel the Northern Indian Winter becoming Spring.

At a certain junction of the Church Road at Allahabad, motor-cars jammed their brakes and began a snail's speed. *Tongas* and *ekkas* passed one another with precious little space between. Bicycles dared narrow unoccupied territory.

A jostling crowd flocked round the daily health bulletin posted at the crossing of ways. For, hard by, under the glistening dome of "Anand Bhavan," Motilal Nehru lay dying.

It was the occasion for an unofficial convention of all the national leaders from the four corners of India. The 'rebel' chiefs of a country of 'rebels' had all been released by Lord Irwin in preparation for negotiations with Gandhi for a truce in the Civil Disobedience Movement. And most of them had made a bee-line for Allahabad including the great Gandhi himself.

In the meanwhile, a small company had gathered in the drawing-room of Professor Amaranath Jha, of the Allahabad University, at whose afternoon parties one met interesting people; heard light laughter over excellent jokes; and got the finest cigarettes. We chatted about this and that in the vague sort of way people chat when they are expecting something better to

come. Between great puffs of blue smoke, I was telling my neighbour of the first time I had seen the chief guest of the evening—who had not yet arrived—Mrs. Sarojini Naidu.

Leaning back in a cosy Chesterfield, my mind got into reverse gear and went back some twelve years or so. It was in the little old fort at Galle, where nothing ever seems to happen beyond an inter-collegiate match or a sensational murder trial, that I first saw the nightingale of India. As the gramophone was voicing forth some weird, haunting melody into the February air, I thought of that morning, some twelve years previous, when I arrived at the New Orient Hotel, to find the ball-room packed like a third-class carriage.

Those were the days before Mr. C. W. W. Kannangara, the Ceylons' Minister of Education, had blazed into the political firmament. Then he was only a thundering voice in the Galle Bar and the local star-orator. Clad in a white tunic coat, tightly buttoned round the neck, he stood bolt upright and introduced Mrs. Naidu with a voice and delivery that made me think of bars of lead and tongues of fire.

Then, she spoke.

Standing in what space was left between a French padre and a Sinhalese gentleman with a hefty umbrella, I listened with the rapture of a first adoration. To be very young is to be idealistic, romantic and imaginative. And I believe I wished that she might have been a little handsome! But the power of her words left me spellbound.

It was not till the gramophone had ceased its weird chants and we had begun discussing

Motilal Nehru's health that she came sailing into the room with a delicious dignity, clad in a saffron-coloured saree of Swadeshi silk. 'Anne Domini' seemed to have pencilled a few lines across her brow since I had first seen her. But the eyes were the same. They reminded me of deep pools of forest water. Speaking her words like nicely cut pieces of silk, in a few minutes she put us all at our ease, taking us into her confidence in a sort of way.

Certain fragments of her talk come back to me with a peculiar insistence as I write. I remember them well because they impressed me then. That is the secret of memory.

"I believe I am the first person in India to have been sorry for my own release," she said, tucking away one foot under her while the other dangled down from the deep chair.

We all shot marks of interrogation at her with our eyes. She smiled and glanced sideways at the Professor. Mrs. Naidu's glance is like a newspaper headline—brief and impressive and sums up all her feelings.

"You know," she explained, "at the Yervada Jail, I grew some chrysanthemum plants, I tended them with care; I watered them with religious devotion. And when they were just putting forth their buds, I was released. I really felt so miserable, I asked the Jailor whether I couldn't stay on at least one week more!"

The Professor's drawing-room was lit with beautiful lamps of white stone from Agra that looked vaguely dreamy. As the evening deepened into night, the light from those dreamy lamps played with the saffron-coloured saree with elfish delight.

The turbaned, immaculately clad servants went round with most of those delicious things worth eating in Northern India; while Mrs. Naidu talked or made others talk.

As she helped herself to sugar, she said: "I like a lot of sugar in my tea. I suppose it's not fashionable; perhaps it's considered vulgar. But I really cannot help it."

Her voice has the quality of shot silk. Its tone changes with each remark. What amazing effects she produces in conversation by the way she changes the tone of her voice!

She talked about her journey straight from the Poona Jail, through Bombay to Allahabad. At almost every halt, she said, people flocked to the compartment owing to the presence of Mahatma Gandhi. Pointing her forefinger in an amusing fashion, she imitated men peeping through the carriage window and pointing their rude fingers at Mr. Gandhi and asking, "Is this the Mahatma?" She had not minded people crowding in so much as the songs they sang. "Those songs might be very patriotic, but from the point of view of music, they were too frightful for words," she declared. Then she imitated some of the songs as though she were a mere slip of a school-girl. We roared with laughter.

Suddenly she became serious. And as she munched a tomato-sandwich slowly, she deplored the bad effects of these popular, patriotic songs. What little taste people had for music got perverted by these awful songs, she said. To her, they had seemed funny. They had jarred on her nerves.

The next moment she was alluringly whimsical. "I can understand little school children on a hartal day indulging in that kind of thing," she went on "but to see fat, podgy, old people with paunches shouting out their lungs in this fashion is too pitiable. Poor dears!" At the word 'paunches,' with her left hand she made a graceful yet huge semi-circle in front of her, indicating to our luxuriant imagination the rotundity of the object mentioned.

Then we talked of a hundred things,—of books and persons and places and silks and pictures. I remember her confessing that she liked Michael Arlan's *Green Hat*. The Professor mentioned that Aldous Huxley had spoken of Mrs. Naidu in his book of Indian travel, *Jesting Pilate*.

"And what has he to say about me?" — this with a note of nothing more than casual inquisitiveness in her voice of shot silk.

"If only all Indian politicians were like you it would be a happier day for India, he says," replied the Professor.

"I don't know," she said, shrugging her shoulders in the manner of Maurice Chevalier, "why people insist upon calling me a politician when I never pretend to be one. It is really an irony of fate and a great joke." Then she recounted how she had met Huxley.

And so on and on and on.

When she heard I was from Ceylon she recalled the time when she went to Lanka for a little holiday — one of the happiest she ever had had.

"But not as a holiday," she added, "for I was kept busier in Ceylon than I would have been in India. Ah! what a hectic time it was — rushing

from one pretty town to another, under the tall swaying palms lining the well-kept roads! But it was a happy time all the same."

She referred to Kandy as "the Dream-city where lay the twilight paths of pearl and gold."

As I sat watching this most celebrated of Indian women sipping her much-sugared tea, I thought of the spirit of life and gaiety that pervaded the scene, full of good cheer.

It was growing late. Each person in the little company several times tried to make a move homewards; but the impulse always ended in lighting another cigarette and turning to Mrs. Naidu with greater eagerness. That vague feeling of shame at having wearied a person and made her talk overmuch for our pleasure descended over us. But it made it all the harder to suggest leaving.

But there never was any hint of weariness in those lustrous eyes shining like dark jewels. She told us that she had a dinner engagement that night.

"But don't you worry," she put in, "there's plenty of time. Besides I am not going to change. The fact of the matter is, I haven't got anything to change into!"

She laughed. And covering her words with the silver paper of light laughter, she spoke of 'the jolly good muddle' she had got into. In the great hurry, she had had no time to pack at Bombay. So she had instructed that two of her trunks that had come from Poona should be sent to her. What did she find on opening one of them at Allahabad? Among other things, a spirit-stove, a tumbler, some cups and a tea-strainer!

"A tea-strainer!" she exclaimed, "God only knows how it got there! Now, I ask you, can I go about dressed in a tea-strainer?"

I came away that evening with a sense of relief that some Indian politicians at least had a sense of humour. But then, Mrs. Naidu is not a politician. She is a woman and a poet.

Her poetry has more of the sensuous than the mystical; more of human passion than divine spirit; more vigorous, active divine discontent than contemplative self-revelation. And all her effects are gained by colour and movement; by the grouping of images and pictures.

As a politician, she takes the same sensuous delight of the poet in working with persons instead of words; of crowding the minute with sixty brave deeds done; and of getting her effects by means of pictures and imagery of living flesh and blood, of ever-moving scenes and action.

Through it all, she is the poet, the sensuous dreamer of:

*The sword of old battles, the crown of old kings,
And happy and simple and sorrowful things.*

I wonder how she ever came to be called a politician. It is a freakish irony of fate that makes saints into 'dictators' and poets into stump orators.

Mrs. Sarojini Naidu's personality is a combination of quicksilver and tempered steel. I am afraid the tempered steel has conquered the quicksilver which is all the better under the circumstances. She will always be remembered as a politician rather than a poet however she may dislike it.

This unusual combination of hard-boiled politician undaunted by long terms of imprisonment and the picturesque poet dealing in jewelled phrases has made her the ideal vamp voice of India. Whenever the Congress felt that a certain area or country was becoming lukewarm or indifferent to the call of Indian Nationalism it would let loose Mrs. Naidu with a roving commission. And never was better vamping ever done in the name of a nation.

She talks politics but in the words of a poet. There is imagery in the invocation; colour in the clarion call; and movement in the message. All this is held together with a natural eloquence that few poets in any part of the world can boast of. The woman who could inspire Jawaharlal Nehru himself way back in 1916 to gird up his loins to fight for freedom could be always counted upon to hold any audience anywhere enthralled for an hour, especially when the spell-binding is lighted up every now and then by vivid flashes of genuine humour.

She vamped her way through Africa in 1924. The proud ornament of tiger claws that she often wears as proudly as a medal is a memento of South Africa. While on the platform her poetic eloquence won her admiring crowds, her sense of humour and lightning wit would sometimes stab a protesting victim into instantaneous obedience. Once General Hertzog asked her why Indians in South Africa did not repatriate to the motherland. "I might as well ask you," replied Mrs. Naidu, "why you Hollanders in South Africa don't return to the Netherlands."

She vamped her way for her country through England and proceeded to America in 1928 to

counteract Miss Mayo's *Mother India* propaganda. When American reporters set upon her and began the onslaught with: "What do you think of Katherine Mayo?" she calmly replied: "Katherine Mayo? Who is she?"

But while she acted the part of the roving ambassador to perfection she never lost her sense of balance. "I can do a good deal for the sake of India," she told the Allahabad students just before setting out to America, "but I shall never lie for her sake." And she always considered herself some kind of juggler with a bag of tricks which sooner or later would be found out. Once when an adorer offered her a heart's adoration of a lecture her whimsical smile played upon her lips to reply: "You won't think so if you heard me for the twentieth time."

She laughs at herself as much as she laughs at all the greatest gods of modern India, including Gandhi and Nehru. But her sincerity is not one iota less. In fact this ability to see the funny side of the most sacred or serious things combined with her charm of manner has enabled her to convert the High Command of the Congress into some strange kind of one Happy Family. Jawaharlal Nehru in her presence is inclined to be a regular naughty boy claiming all the privileges of a younger brother to tease her with scant respect. "Oh! Nightingale of India, will you please shut up!" he might say with assumed impudence. And I can well imagine her at the breakfast table at Anand Bhavan turning in retort and saying: "Oh! Priceless Jewel of India, will you please pass the sugar?". There is a touch of Allen Terry and Mona Lisa combined in her make up, an impish trait that is half Puck's, half eternal woman's but completely alluring,

In 1930 when the Congress Committee decided on Civil Disobedience and were dispersing from Ahmedabad Mrs. Naidu exhorted them to "go and pack up your tooth brushes for the speedy journey to gaol."

When the Congress split in 1925 it was the poetic pleading of Mrs. Naidu that brought the stormy elements of Bengal once more within the fold.

She has been the example supreme to all Indian womanhood. In almost every Province now there are Indian heroines—Mrs. Vijayalaxmi Pandit, Mrs. Asaf Ali, Captain Lakshmi, Hamsa Mehta. But there was once a time when there was just one Sarojini Naidu.

She has fought for woman's right for a room of her own as for the nation's right for a kingdom of her own. And she fought with charm, laughter, tears and flights of poetry.

Her parties, when she used to have her apartments in the Taj Mahal Hotel, Bombay, were the most famous political conversaziones in India. Here would meet famous and unknown men and women, rich and poor, Indians and foreigners, capitalists and socialists, nationalists and toadies under the auspices of this most sociable of hostesses in the political hierarchy in India.

More than other Indian politicians she has all the qualifications to represent India abroad and in India itself. In her person and background she is like modern India. She has discarded all that modern India hopes to shed. She has proved in person all that modern India hopes to prove in the future. For her there is neither border, breed nor birth that stands in the way of

her understanding and accommodation. Though a Bengali by birth she has been domiciled in Hyderabad and can speak English, Hindi and Urdu with almost equal eloquence. The fact that her Bengali is not so fluent saves her from provincialism and makes her more a daughter of all India. Though a Brahmin by birth, a Chattopadhyaya, she married a Sudra, Major Naidu, defying all traditions. Though Indian to the core she was educated at King's College, London, and Girton College, Cambridge, where, to begin with, she wrote English poems about English flowers. It was Arthur Symonds who saw in the young girl who had come to England after passing her Calcutta Entrance Examination at the age of twelve, a real poet and asked her to write about India in the idiom most natural to her. Fiercely independent she is daring in her audacity like modern India herself. Engrossed in the fate of the nation she has no time for poetry and has made it a mere pastime. Though a woman she has always done a man's job, never allowing her domestic life to interfere with her mission. Her children who were quite a handful could never disturb her composure and upset her sense of humour.

Without her the National Congress might have become powerful but never so inspiring. She brought it to the bosom of the nation. She gave it a touch of feminine refinement just as Jawaharlal Nehru gave it masculine intellectual polish. The Indian Congress by making her its first Indian woman President in 1925 put a political halo round her head. And from that day to this she has remained the first woman in India barring none, the uncrowned queen of a nation—and what is more one of the first three women in the world. And all this has been to

her, as to Mona Lisa, but as the sound of lyres and flutes, and lives in the delicacy with which it has moulded the changing lineaments and tinged the eyelids and hands.

S. Radhakrishnan



CAME the year 1945. Came the month of April. Came the day the fifteenth. And for a brief space honoured I stood before an honoured man whom I bade welcome when he last visited Ceylon.

That moment has become a moving force in the memory. Children were drawn from play and old men from comfortable corners on a holiday by the magic of the magnetic name of one who came from a land that had always glittered with great men.

Since the great dawn of history when the sturdy Aryans with flowing beards came pouring over the passes into India, a long line of wise men standing sheer and aloof in their knowledge and wisdom above the blind and battling multitudes have burned like pyramids of fire casting their spell over the land. These teachers were called Rishis. The inspired Rishis gave us the first inklings of mathematics and science. They invented the decimal system of numeration along with its figures that has transformed the whole world. They showed men how to heal and probed into the mysteries of the universe and spoke out in the calm grandeur of sober lines.

The tradition of the Rishi is alive in India even today. Sir Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan is the twentieth century equivalent of the ancient Hindu Rishi; the inspired philosopher at whose feet the tempests lose their guile.

When he first lit the lamp of Indian philosophy in the West it made the European savants blink. It also illumined his own face to the world. With him philosophy is not a bare catalogue of fatiguing facts and tiring theories of dead authors and their musty old writings but a fascinating story that grips the mind and enthral the imagination. This modern Recording Rishi of Indian philosophy, unlike other historians, uses his scholarship to wrest from philosophical watch-words the thoughts embedded in them and reset them like jewels in epigrams giving out a strange new brilliance. It is as though we were peering into ultimate reality lit by flashes of vivid lightning.

Philosophy, to me, is like a heavy headache on a wet day. The trouble with philosophy is that it is boring. If only philosophy could be made interesting we would all read philosophy. For most men at heart are philosophers. This is the man who makes philosophy interesting and religion fascinating. He writes philosophy in epigrams and expounds religion in aphorisms.

Professor Sir Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan is not dull. A tall lanky virile Andhra of fifty five, well-dressed and spick and span, he stands upright with an intense vitality filling his eyes welled with visions. His speech is pithy, polished and precise. He studies philosophy as a scientist—not as a moralist.

It would not hurt him if you disagree with him—it only hurts him if you do not understand him. For he is the best exponent of philosophy in India, a land where every man is steeped in eternity and every woman in the mystery of the unknown. There are greater philosophers in India. But their philosophy

is sticky. Radhakrishnan serves out philosophy crisp hot from the oven.

And his effortless, startling style illuminated by aphorisms gives philosophy a sugar-coating. "It takes centuries to make a little history; it takes centuries of history to make a tradition," he says and passes on, while you dwell on the nicety of the expression and the pithiness of the fluency. "Poets and prophets do not go into committees." "A stone is not self any more than a self is a stone." And then, he describes a millennium as a time when "all the heads will be hard and all the pillows soft." "We are taught to fly in the air like birds, and swim in the water like fishes; but how to live on earth (like men) we do not know," says he epitomising the Eastern commentary on Western civilisation. "We are grown-up infants, and God is a sort of 'wet nurse' to humanity," he writes in another context. "We invent by intuition, though we prove by logic," he comments while dealing with Intuition in his *An Idealist View of Life*. "To be ignorant is not the special prerogative of man; to know that he is ignorant is his special privilege," he declares.

It seems not philosophy we are hearing. His sentences seem lines from literature in the most scintillating jewellery of polished epigrams of Oscar Wilde. He lectures without notes. But the sentences take the turns with a perfection all their own. Vivid. Arresting. Picturesque. There is a spontaneity in his intellectual thought. But it is a scientific spontaneity.

Radhakrishnan is a philosophical bilinguist who acts as the liaison officer of Hinduism. He is equally well-versed in Western philosophical thought and in Eastern. And he expounds the

East to the West and the Occident to the Orient. But it is no mere exposition. Originality in philosophy, as in poetry, consists not in the novelty of the tale or the light and shade distributed over the canvas but the depth and subtlety made to dominate the details. In this sense, Professor Radhakrishnan is original in his exposition as a poet or a painter in expression. He has found a new technique in the presentation of Oriental philosophy. He presents ultimate truths of religion in the psychological idiom of this age.

His view of religion is entirely devoid of sentimental sloppiness. It is a carefully reasoned statement in which the maximum value is placed on the arguments of the opponents. He looks at religious experience with detachment and examines with impartiality the spiritual inheritance of men of all creeds and of none. "We become more religious in proportion to our readiness to doubt and not our willingness to believe," he says. "We must respect our own dignity as rational beings and thus diminish the power of fraud. It is better to be free than be a slave, better to know than to be ignorant. It is reason that helps us to reject what is falsely taught and believed about God, that He is a detective officer or a capricious despot or a glorified schoolmaster. It is essential that we should subject religious beliefs to the scrutiny of reason."

Radhakrishnan was born in 1888 at Tirutani, a small hamlet near Madras but famous throughout India as a pilgrim centre. His parents being poor, his early life was confined to the place of his birth and another pilgrim place, Tirupati, seeing peasants pouring in from all

parts of India in a stream seeking salvation. Perhaps because of this background, from the time he became conscious of himself he has had a firm faith in the reality of an unseen world which he has all along tried to unravel. He was educated in Christian missionary institutions. In turn he attended the German Mission High School, Tirupati, Voorhees' College, Vellore, and Christian College, Madras. By the time he graduated he was well versed in the Bible and familiar with the pet criticisms of the missionaries about Hinduism. To the European, Indian philosophy at the time meant at best a few "silly" notions about "Atma" and "Karma." Macaulay had declared that one shelf of a European library contained more knowledge than all the literature of the East put together. "The challenge of Christian critics impelled me to make a study of Hinduism and find out what is living and what is dead in it," he says. "My pride as a Hindu roused by the enterprise and eloquence of Swami Vivekananda was deeply hurt by the treatment accorded to Hinduism in missionary institutions." The spirit of the times in which India, as it were, was turning in its sleep, strengthened this resolve to pierce the veil of Indian superstition at which the missionary laughed and get at the symbols of thoughts beyond reach of our rational minds. His first thesis was on "Ethics of the Vedanta" and was intended as a reply to the charge that Vedanta as a system had no room for ethics. It is really the missionary who made him a philosopher.

Radhakrishnan entered life in the Provincial Education Service of Madras as a lecturer on a hundred rupees a month. He lisped in philosophy

EMINENT INDIANS

and the philosophy came. It did not take him long to become Assistant Professor in philosophy, Presidency College, Madras. In 1916 he became Professor. His services were lent to the Mysore University for three years after 1918. Just then, Ashutosh Mookerjee, "the Tiger of Bengal," the then Vice-Chancellor of the Calcutta University, was scenting the Indian horizon for talent to pounce upon. From the Audit Department of the Government of India, he "bagged" (now Sir) C. V. Raman. From the University of Mysore he grabbed the youngest professor in India at the time, Mr. S. Radhakrishnan, and made him the King George V Professor of Mental and Moral Sciences at Calcutta, the most important chair of philosophy in India.

Professor Radhakrishnan first astounded all European philosophers by his *Indian Philosophy* in 1923. Since then he has delivered the Upton and Hibbert lectures at Oxford and the Haskell lectures on Comparative Religion at Chicago. He was Professor of Comparative Religion at Manchester College, Oxford, in 1929-30. He was the first Vice-Chancellor of the new Andhra University at Waltair.

An Idealist View of Life, the Hibbert lectures in book form, perhaps reveals the Professor at his best as the attractive philosopher and keen man of scientific thought. Here he examines what is wrong with modern civilization which, according to him, is soulless. Politics and economics do not take their direction from ethics and religion. The decay of dogmatic, mechanical religion led to the rise of a number of substitutes or modes of escape, which do not show an adequate appreciation of the natural

profundity of the human soul. Secular wisdom, however rational, is no substitute for religion. And if the lost soul is to be restored to human life and action a new vital religion which does not require us to surrender the rights of reason, must be adopted. Religion is not a creed or a code but an insight into reality. The demands of our civilization direct investigation and practical application of our material resources which, of course, has benefited mankind enormously. But electrons and protons do not clear up the mystery of reality. God and the soul cannot be treated as mathematical equations. While the rationality of the world is transparent to the intellect its mysteriousness can be grasped only by intuition. Intuitive knowledge is not opposed to intellectual knowledge as some suppose. Intuition assumes the continuity and unity of all experience.

The end of man, according to the *An Idealist View of Life*, is to let the spirit in him permeate his whole being, his soul, flesh and affections. He attains his deepest self by losing his selfish ego. Man is no mere sum of his instincts and desires. There is always a tension between what we are and what we wish to become. Our earthly joys would pale before that spiritual bliss like electric lamps before the morning sun. No individual is really saved until society as a whole is perfected. The stronger should help the weaker until all are saved, until the temporal becomes the eternal.

In *The Hindu View of Life*, Radhakrishnan represents Hinduism as a progressive historical movement still in the making. Its adherents are not custodians of a deposit but runners carrying a lighted torch. The history of the faith is

strewn with customs, traditions and institutions which were invaluable at first but deadly afterwards. Gross abuses which still survive require to be cut off with an unsparing hand. Truth is greater than its greatest teachers. Hinduism insists on the upward striving not only in the sphere of morals but in that of intellect. The law of Karma affirms the presence of the past in the present. He also answers the criticism of the Hindu faith advanced by missionaries, which was the momentum that made him take to philosophy as a profession.

In *Kalki, or the Future of Civilization*, he deals with the fact that although science has helped us to build up our outer life, we are not above the level of past generations in ethical and spiritual life. If anything, we have declined. Our natures are becoming mechanised. Void within, we are being reduced to mere members of a mob. There is a tendency to seek salvation in herds. For a complete human being we require the cultivation of the grace and joy of souls overflowing in love and devotion and the free service of a regenerated humanity.

Quite a number of persons had been writing on Indian philosophy before there arrived Radhakrishnan on the scene. But most of them had been so busy laying the foundations that they had forgotten to build the house. In *Indian Philosophy* he not only laid a stone foundation surely and truly but also built an edifice that shall outlast any philosophic storm. It was not so much a history as an exposition, and the exposition was vivid, vital and gripping. It was full of feeling. It made an epoch by itself. It was the two volumes of *Indian Philosophy* in the "Library of Philosophy" that

showed that there was hardly any height of spiritual insight or rational philosophy attained in the world that has not its parallel in the vast stretch he dealt with that lies between the early sages and the modern Naiyayikas.

Being a Buddhist I was particularly interested in that section in which he summarised Buddhism in less than a hundred pages. He has examined all sects and schools and delved deep into the doctrines of the Thathagatha. He has not only pried unerringly into Buddhistic doctrines but also moved in the vague regions of the devotee's myths and legends of the Buddha with the scientist's probing mind. His view of the downfall of Buddhism in India is contrary to that held by the Southern School. "The violent extermination of Buddhism in India is legendary," says Sir Sarvapalli. Buddhism grew weaker as it spread wider. The spirit of compromise which breathed in the XIIIth Edict of Asoka that "there should be no praising of one's sect and decrying of other sects but on the contrary a rendering of honour to other sects for whatever cause honour may be due to them," was its strength and weakness. It accommodated too much. Divinities and heavens slipped into Buddhism from other creeds with the spread of the religion. "The disciples surrounded with cheap marvels and wonders the lonely figure of that serene Soul, simple and austere in his yellow robes, walking with bared feet and bowed head towards Benares." According to Radhakrishnan, to inspire the outer world with respect for the figure of the Master, honest propagandists developed rather dishonest history. Slow absorption and silent indifference and not priestly fanaticism and methodical destruction are the

"How could I," he asked, "when I was so happy in the love of God?"

"It is much," said the Angel. "Here is your crown, and it is made of gold; but jewels are for those who wept."

It is by suffering that we understand.

In Radhakrishnan we find the best example of what is known as the hospitality of the Hindu mind. He has no intellectual or spiritual hatreds. In the case of most religionists and philosophers the moment they begin to speak of God and Love their voices become hard and their eyes are filled with hate. The generous hospitality of Radhakrishnan's mind welcomes the other party with a smile and a cheer. His religious sense, deeply sensitive from early childhood, has not allowed him to speak a rash or profane word of anything which man holds sacred. This has often got him into trouble, especially with Westerners who are as a rule inhospitable in mind. C. E. M. Joad writes: "Radhakrishnan expounds so forcibly even the views with which he disagrees that one is never quite sure of his own disagreement or by consequence of his own agreement with what he says." Sir Herbert Samuel has pointed out that the reader is sometimes not as clear as he would like to be whether Radhakrishnan is speaking his own mind or revealing the mind of others, or whether, when he is quite palpably doing the latter, his tacit agreement with what he is saying is to be assumed.

While he passes as a sociable creature fond of lionising and social occasions for shining, he confesses that when in company "unless it be with one or two who know me well, it is with an

effort that I get along." Joad records an interesting anecdote in this respect: "I shall not easily forget dining in company with Radhakrishnan at H. G. Wells's flat. Besides Wells and myself there was only one other person present, J. W. N. Sullivan, the well-known writer on scientific subjects. The talk was continuous and eager; it included science, philosophy, the state of the world, the possible collapse of Western civilization. Radhakrishnan was for the most part silent. He sat there refusing one after another the dishes of an elaborate meal, drinking only water, listening. We others, knowing his reputation as a speaker and conversationalist were, I think, a little surprised at this silence; surprised, and impressed, not so much because what he did say was always to the point, but because his silence in such a discussion was a richer and more significant thing than any positive contribution he could have made."

But he has a charming manner of putting the smallest man or woman at his or her ease, high or low, young or old, if the need arises. And Radhakrishnan converses exactly as he lectures—but in carpet slippers as it were. Lecturing has become second nature with him. He tucks both legs, one now, and the other a little later, under him, lays his turban aside, unbuttons his cream-coloured long silk coat, and will hold you in thrall for an hour even if you are the only one in the drawing-room audience, speaking out his polished periods as if he were delivering the Upton Lectures. There is something almost mechanical in the performance—a combination of a slot-machine, a gramophone and Srinivasa Sastri. But it is altogether fascinating and bewildering: this Savant Act by the hour.

He likes solitude, books, dreaming, travelling, catching trains straight from lectures, giving his grand-children a good time — and admiration.

Success, to a certain extent, has spoilt him. He adores people to sit at the feet of the master, as it were, and drink in the untiring inspiration he pours out. He is inclined to be a little peevish of criticism and impatient of those who do not consider him the superman he really is.

Philosophy cannot be proved like geometry and is a series of probabilities at best. And to me the arguments in philosophy seem like sets of reasoning exercises that one philosopher uses to prove that a rival is wrong. But the human mind will always speculate on the Ultimate Reality, or the Destiny of Man, or Immortality; for they are the most primitive and the most civilized instincts of human beings. And if I must speculate on these vast subjects, I would rather do it with Professor Radhakrishnan than with anybody else.

For he allows me the freedom to doubt. And doubt, to me, the laughter of the mind, is the only thing that makes thinking interesting and life worth living.



S. RADHAKRISHNAN



J. KRISHNAMURTI

Jiddu Krishnamurti



It is a strange destiny for a man to be exhibited for half his life as a bit torn off from the Divine and then spend the other half denying the divinity attributed to him. But that is the unusual life that is the fate of Jiddu Krishnamurti. From the age of twelve when he was picked up from the scraggy village of Madanapalle by C. W. Leadbeater and Mrs. Annie Besant, till the age of thirty he passed off as the coming World-Teacher, the new Christ, the new Messiah.

An organisation composed mostly of rich old ladies of Europe and young enthusiastic fanatics of the East worshipped the handsome boy with long hair, dressed in loose clothes, white, samite, mystic, wonderful. No modern teacher ever before arisen in the East had such an organised following, ready to hear the word of the new Master, waiting for the hidden light. Krishnamurti was brought up like a princeling. Aristocratic ladies in England provided him with education; millionaires in India paid for his clothes; Mrs. Besant with the care of a pelican nurtured him with the devotion of her life-blood. Strange, weird prayers were made up to invoke his blessing; pious meditations were inflicted upon the faithful as a preparation to receiving the new light. But the ordinary man knew as much about Krishnamurti as a camel knows about the cosmos. Nobody cared a hog's ear for the vague generality of the coming of a World-Teacher.

For over a score of years Mrs. Besant spoke about a mysterious teacher coming to lead the earth to a spiritual El Dorado. We seemed none the better for it; we went our way getting and spending and buying gramophones in the same old manner, teacher or no teacher.

I do not know where to begin in this history of the Krishnamurti cult. But always, as in all things, there is the very beginning itself.

If we put ourselves into reverse gear and travel back some thirty-five years, we find a carefree lad, with the smile of a nymph, playing about the Headquarters of the Theosophical Society at Adyar, Madras, where his father is a valiant knight of the quill at an office desk. Nobody seems in the least to see any divinity in this half skeleton, half imp of a boy, or even suspect him of hidden holiness.

Then one fine morning, we find Krishnamurti taken under the wings of the late Mrs Besant and C. W. Leadbeater, the other demigod of the Theosophists. As if by magic the attitude of the residents towards the boy changes. People whisper in low tones as to what is going on. A veil of mystery hangs on the air of peaceful Adyar. And the lazy river flows on to the sea as if nothing in the world had happened.

In 1911, a little of the pregnant mystery was revealed by the starting at Benares of an organisation called the Order of the Rising Sun, consisting of those who believed in the coming of a great teacher with this lad in his teens as the Head. Subsequently the name of the Order was changed to that of Order of the Star in the East — for what reason we know not — perhaps the heat of the rising sun was too much for an already sunburnt boy.

Then followed a notorious law-suit, between Mrs. Besant and Krishnamurti's father for the guardianship of the boy. After which Krishnamurti and his brother were packed off to Europe where under the care of Lady Emily Lutyens they were trained partly by private tutors and mainly by C. W. Leadbeater for the World-Teachership of a wretched earth.

Years roll by. Nothing happens.

The coming of the World-Teacher seems to belong to the category of those episodes that loom so large but never happen—like the war between the East and the West, or the trip to the moon.

But with the devotees of Mrs. Besant the idea became their philosopher's stone. They set apart a certain part of their leisure to sit immobile and sedate trying to make their minds as nearly vacuums as possible in what they called spiritual contemplation. They composed strange prayers and nice little essays which, so they believed, would speed things up. If the World-Teacher did not accelerate his coming, clearly it was not their fault. Though these strange believers were few and far between yet there was a great affinity between them by way of a vast organization that girdled the globe from California to Colombo. They used to meet regularly in one of the capitals of Europe and pray with gusto every year for the coming Lord.

And in 1923 the advent which had seemed to hang fire for so long went off with a bang when at a camp held at Ommen in Holland Mrs. Besant announced that Krishnamurti would be the "vehicle" of the World-Teacher—whatever that might have meant. And in her business-like

way she appointed disciples straight away — full seven of them.

From that time onwards this young man became the Prince of Wales of the Theosophical Society. Wherever he happened to go visiting Theosophical centres, he would be the guest of honour; receptions and conversaziones would be given in his honour; garlands would be thrown round his neck; and cameras would click "welcome". And everything of the best would always be provided for him.

He was a strange kind of spiritual teacher. Here was a young man who played tennis, wore reefer-blazers and led a vagrant gypsy life galivanting almost once a year half round the world with his hands in his trouser pockets. To all outward appearances he was nothing more than a well-washed, cultured Indian and a great play-boy at that. There was very little of the uncouth, dirty holiness of the fakir about him. Was it possible that this play-boy of the Eastern Star would show a new way to happiness — would found a new religion? Those who saw him then shrugged their shoulders and went their way, wondering.

But Theosophists had little doubt. Devotees flocked from far and near to the Jubilee Convention of the Society in 1925 — there was a bent old lady of seventy from Iceland — to hear the voice of the new "vehicle". And under the banyan tree at Adyar on the morning of the 28th day of the month of December, 1925, the "voice" of the World-Teacher is supposed to have spoken for the first time through Krishna-murti.

It took a couple of years for the new teacher to realize the giddy heights where he had been

pitched by well-meaning devotees who hungered for a new idol—a modern model of Christ in a modern setting—to worship. But the brave young man was equal to the task. Hearken to him in 1927: “I talked of vague generalities which everybody wanted. I never said I am the World-Teacher; but now that I feel I am one with the Beloved, I say it.”

In 1925 I heard him speak under the great banyan tree at Adyar as the full-fledged Messiah. Speaking in the first person singular, the once shy Brahmin youth declared he came not to tear down but to build. The pious Theosophists were excited no end. The World-Teacher had come, and symposiums describing the wondrous day filled Theosophical magazines.

Krishnamurti allowed his sponsors a free hand. He was evidently enjoying the joyous doings and the good things going. He talked poetically. He talked intensely, quivering with a peculiar kind of emotional nervousness. Happiness was his message. Experience was his watchword. Suffering was his cry.

One wondered what experience, what suffering this young man who had been brought up like a princeling and who lived his life like a cinema star could have known. Did he know the pinch of poverty? Did he know the ache of hunger? Had he seen the terrible sufferings of his own kith and kin? Only the death of his brother, beautiful Nityananda, could have shaken his life to some extent. Apart from that he had had no real touch with this earth, living all the while under the wings of patrons in an unreal, unusual world peopled with curious superstitions and strange beliefs. Yet old men with beards listened to the wisdom that came from the lips

of this lad wearing his hair longer than he should and his clothes looser than there was any need to. He talked ironically enough about suffering, of being clean and neat and tidy, and the glorious necessity of using pocket handkerchiefs. Strange teachings for a new Messiah.

At the climax of this "stupendous" drama, adapted from the life of Christ, produced by Mrs. Annie Besant, directed by Mr. C. W. Leadbeater, with settings by Mr. G. S. Arundale and the Lady Emily Lutyens, a dramatic event turns the story—more dramatic than anything the originators could ever have imagined.

As thirty thousand people of all classes and creeds hang on the words of the new teacher, the hero of the piece turns round and denies the role he has been playing. Not only does he deny he is the mighty being, the World-Teacher, but he also dissolves the Order that made him famous and questions the very foundations of the Theosophical Society that worshipped him.

And thus the modern model of Christ fades out of the picture, while the whole concourse of people who had flocked to hear the voice of the young teacher once more arisen from the unchanging mysterious East are left bewildered and gaping in the gathering gloom.

There is a pause.

Then life goes on: the threads of talk and laughter are picked up; the men and women move on, getting and spending and buying gramophones as they did before, after a life of make-believe.

And when the dawn arrives and they see this young man in the light of his own greatness they

smile the smile of the enlightened and decide that he is their real guide, there is nobody like Krishnamurti—World-Teacher or no World-Teacher—this charming young man with a mysterious past who speaks French to perfection and can swing a tennis racquet and a golf-club as well as any man.

Since the death of Mrs. Besant the cleavage that existed between the two factions, the Theosophists and the Krishnamurti-worshippers, has widened. Today Krishnamurti is his own master, having abandoned the apron-strings of his sponsors, definitely, emphatically. To her dying day Mrs. Besant looked upon him as her new Guru, despite the religious desperado of this young Andhra. C. W. Leadbeater sat looking over the lazy Adyar river murmuring to himself and shaking his head at the revolutionary ideas of his former ward, now a downright prodigal playing ducks and drakes with his portion of spiritual greatness.

There was a sense of tears, a touch of ingratitude in the new attitude of Krishnamurti to his old clan of idol-worshippers.

The fascination of Krishnamurti to the devotees lies mostly in the silky personality that this young man has developed through years of training to be winsome and wordy. A thrill goes down the spine of old ladies hankering after excitement when he speaks.

Today Krishnamurti is a rebel thinker. He preaches spiritual anarchy. Down with all your temples and churches and all your organisations for the worship of Divinity. Follow none. Be happy and you will be good.

This is the Krishnamurti that these new devotees worship—the man who dances the dance of destruction of all traditions and conventions, who is out to shock the pious and the holy in what he deems giving life a meaning.

To the Indians his new spirituality has a flavour of foreign splendour. He is a European with an Indian skin. He may, with an amusing precision, put on immaculate Indian clothes while in India, but with his forgetting his mother-tongue, he has forgotten the India of the Indians. He is essentially a teacher of the West, where he is one with the people in ideas and habits and attitude of mind. Krishnamurti knows this and sticks to the West. He comes to India as a bird of passage.

As the hot Summer breezes scorch through the Indian plains, Krishnamurti packs up his cotton *kurtas* and says farewell, attended by a dozen satellites. And for a short time we may hear no more of him.

In India he was never taken seriously. He felt out of place in the country. His spirituality had a foreign splendour, as in the cricket of Duleepsinhji. It was not born in India. It was inculcated spirituality, instilled religion. He was a new Messiah made to order, brought up in a hot-house atmosphere of a strange life that had nothing to do with the ordinary man. In India he was always considered a good joke.

If joke he was, he was one of the most brilliant jests at the expense of the divinity ever cracked by man.

For he snapped his fingers at his patrons; shot out his tongue at the holy humbugs who

hankered after excitement and washed his hands clean of all this World-Teacher business. Therein lies the real greatness of this young man with strange eyes and polished manners. It was no easy thing to do—to escape from offered worship and devoted adoration, and face the hostility of the Theosophical big bosses who have “excommunicated” him.

Krishnamurti is a pleasant young man with a sense of humour and a sensibility far above that of an average Indian. But that strange episode will always haunt him. He will always be known as the man who is not the Messiah. That label will stick to him for ever. It is the ghost that will again and again spoil his life.

A remarkable man is Krishnamurti, one cannot deny that. Next to Jawaharlal Nehru, Krishnamurti's is the most attractive personality that India has produced during recent times in the way of polished men. Polished like marble in speech, looking like a figure from the Ajanta figures in the flesh with perfect Aryan features and lustrous almond-shaped eyes, Krishnamurti speaks with a verve in perfect English.

He is not cursed with the brusque directness of the political aristocrat from Allahabad nor his fiery fervour. But he has a magnetic appeal to all those who come into touch with him. Young women go crazy at the sight of this handsome man and old ladies get the thrill of their lifetime at the sound of his voice. Those who pretend not to care a hoot for him fall prey to his magnetism the moment he comes on the scene. His charm of manner captivates the young; his semi-mysticism lassos the old.

He has made spirituality his profession; preaching his mission. He goes from clime to

clime telling people to be good. And, it must be said, he does it exceedingly well. He ought to, for from early childhood he was trained to play a great part in the regeneration of this horrible earth.

What colossal self-confidence this shy young man with an artificial silk magnetism must have to imagine his idyllic metaphors and his vague poetry are going to change this world!

If only he would give up this wanton life of vagabondage over the earth in search of foul souls to cure, and would face life like a man and tackle its problems, how much more useful he would be to other men in general and himself in particular.

He comes to preach—but it is he who needs all the preaching. His life now consists of living in luxurious hotels, travelling in luxury liners, taking rest, lecturing to unwilling, inquisitive men and women who come to see him through human curiosity, writing run-on poetry and again taking rest. He is notorious for taking rest. That is one of his greatest hobbies. He gets tired incessantly, unaccountably, invariably.

It has been an easy life for him, to fit himself to be a preacher. He has had no wealth to give up, no sacrifice to make, no suffering to face. The only sacrifice he did was turning down the offer of some crazy Hollywood producer to employ him as a cinema star. But till the end of his days he will preach, usually under spreading trees, telling people to be happy. Otherwise he would not be Krishnamurti, the man who was once the Messiah, the lad with the magnetic spell of mysticism in his eyes.

Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru



SPREAD over Eurasia there must be thousands of people whose conception of Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru is almost the same. To the majority, the name suggests the Indian peace-maker—the cooing dove flying between or attempting incessantly to flap his wings between Yeravada and New Delhi, with the olive branch.

I shall always picture him as I last saw him in October 1932 in his home, No. 19, Albert Road, Allahabad.

It was a moderate-sized, two-storeyed, flat-roofed house according to the simple, solid architectural style of a day gone by — unpretentious, respectable, bourgeois, like hundreds of others that shelter the prosperous, somewhat slow-moving inhabitants of Allahabad. One touch of rhetoric, however: glazed tiles of white and green cling to the walls of the verandah up to a height of about five feet.

As he rose and offered his hand I felt I was shaking hands with a soft quilt — his large palms seemed as though they had been padded with silk cotton.

Clad in a pair of ultra-comfortable two-foot-wide Lucknow pyjamas and a long *kurta* of Dacca muslin, he soon settled down in his favourite chair with one leg over its fellow.

I expected to see a man bent and bald with misty eyes swimming in an ideality of peace and

goodwill. Instead I met a man who might challenge anyone to a duel at short notice, stalwart, with a hawk's beak and eyes that shone with a glitter like light flashing on drawn swords. But the inborn urge to fight was discernibly kept under good control by discipline. As a result his nationalism has always been tempered with rationalism; his patriotism with prudence. Clearly, a clear-headed man who would be the last to run after a mirage or be wedded to a political vision.

The yellow light of the fading sun came into his sanctum, touching with a lustre here a Persian vase that reminded me of the poems of Omar Khayyam and dark-eyed women behind veils; there, a cigarette box picked up perhaps in Egypt; and on the low divan a long, round, tasselled cushion against which one usually sat cross-legged chewing betel and reading a book of verse. Books lay scattered on tables and shelves, and a newspaper covered a part of the arabesque pattern of the Mirzapur carpet. The shout of a camel-driver drifted into the room from the highway.

Whenever I have had occasion to look upon a man who had played a great part in the national life of India I have gone away with the wonderment how such an ordinary man could have so much greatness peaked on his head. Often men have pointed their rude fingers at Gandhi inquiring: "Is this the Mahatma?" as though it were incredible. Mr. Vallabhbhai Patel might be taken for a washed farmer clean from the plough.

Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru's personality does not play hide and seek with the stranger. He has no subtlety, no mystery. His is an obvious

brilliance that speaks aloud for recognition in form and essence and seems to demand more space to express itself.

If Sir Tej is a leader in any sense now, he is a leader without a following. As he himself declared after he came back from the last Round Table Conference, he is a political orphan, claimed by no party, followed by none. I doubt whether in the whole of India there are more than ten people to whom he is the supreme guide in the sense Gandhi is to the older generation or Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru is to the middle-aged generation and Jai Prakash is to the younger.

There is only one political party in India — Congress. The Liberals are and always have been a party of leaders following one another — a phantom party existing on paper and in conferences. Their greatest acts are oratical outbursts from the rostrum; their bravest deeds, a few resolutions in conference. Sir Tej has given up even this apology of a following of late.

Yet there is no other man whose word is heard with silence by all parties — Congress, Government, Liberal, Nationalist, or Independent. He was the only Liberal on whom Congress could not look down with contempt as it did on all other Liberals. He may not have the homage of one party but he gets attention from them all; he may not lead the nation but he is the pathfinder, the scout that explores; he may not fight with his back to the wall but he is the herald of peace when the deadlock occurs.

His was the first voice that rang clear for the boycott of the Simon Commission. He hyphenated the Congress and the Government in the Gandhi-Irwin Pact. And he went to London for

the First Round Table Conference as a "traitor to his country." to use his own phrase, representing perhaps his own self. When all those around him were losing their heads, he has stood a cool contrast against the broiling background since that fateful day when Gandhi started his weary march to the sea-coast armed with a pilgrim's staff and a pair of spectacles to make small quantities of very bad common salt. And without a party and a following he has figured so largely in Indian politics simply because he could not be ignored,

"If there is one department of life in which Indians have established their superiority, it is the department of law," said Sir Tej, speaking slowly—very slowly. And if there is an Indian who has proved his superiority over others in this department it is the stalwart widower, Dr. Sapru. His legal knowledge is worth a king's ransom, and as a pinch of law goes a longer way than a pound of pother he can tell the grey-beards the truth at times and stay youth with a few cold facts.

There is this peculiarity in being a popular leader; even as you lead the crowd where you want to, by some irresistible law you find you follow the crowd, too, unconsciously, where it wants to be led. Dr. Sapru is too independent-minded a man ever to bend his knee before the insolent might of the crowd. Thus he has held himself aloof, not caring for popular acclamation and not seeking it.

As the years sped by and this former Law Member of the Governor-General's Council and once President of the All-India Liberal Federation grew to be fat and over fifty, a certain rock-like quality got into his being, a suggestion of

something lonely, with a surface unwrinkled by the tempests that raged all round the hardened core. In his magic circle he has accommodated only his good companion, Mr. Jayakar.

To him the chances of success of non-cooperation and boycott and civil disobedience as tactics to wrest political power from a mighty, haughty Empire were all Lombard Street to a China orange. Rather, the way lay in coaxing and courting and desperately co-operating in the true oriental manner — through long arguments about it and about. It was the only way open to a people hag-ridden by poverty, unarmed and virtuous.

And he followed this policy and was successful, even though the last straw was put on the camel's back in a scheme untouchable to Congress and condemned by all in India including himself — the White Paper.

"When you bear in mind the conditions in which the people live in the villages, the houses which are worse than pigsties, their economic distress," he declared, "then you will realize that the occasion will not be for us to fight for the precision of one word here or one word there or for the theoretical perfection of the scheme but the occasion will require that within the limits we should use all our energies for justifying the demand which has been put forward that there should be a new constitution and that the present constitution must go."

Only a man with soul dipped in vinegar would call this man who refused to be carried away by the whirl of the torrent of headlong nationalism a mere self-seeker.

"I have been faithful to thee, Cynara, in my fashion," sang Ernest Dowson, that gleaming

sapphire of a poet. Sir Tej also has been faithful to his country in his fashion, according to his lights.

During that hour's conversation with me this man revealed a personality that contrasted with the usual second-class Congress leader with a happy difference. The lesser Congress leader carries with him an air of rough bluster—a sense of the uncut diamond. His talk is as desperate as a cubist picture; and there is perhaps a wealth of tears and melodrama without which the crepe-souled proletarian can never do.

In Sir Tej, the great scholar of Persian and Privy Councillor, you find an Indian who is the soul of urbanity but is unconscious of it; who is a great patriot but not mighty proud of the fact.

The moderates quietly dropped out of the Congress tree like rotten fruit, one by one, when new guests shook the overburdened organisation. "I remember that many of us young men in Allahabad," says Jawaharlal Nehru, "then had a faint hope that perhaps Dr. Sapru might take up a more advanced attitude in politics. Of all the moderate group in the city he seemed to be the most likely to do so because he was emotional and could occasionally be carried away by enthusiasm."

Incidentally no man was happier than Sapru when Jawaharlal, as a new cub, made his first public speech at Allahabad. "As soon as the meeting was over," writes Nehru, "Dr. Tej Bahadur Sapru, to my great embarrassment, embraced and kissed me in public on the dais."

Jawaharlal Nehru was the arch-iconoclast of the Liberals. He has never had a good word for them. It irritated him to see them publicly

glorifying the pomp and power of Empire. And Sir Tej had said at the Imperial Conference in London in 1923: "I can say with pride that it is my country that makes the Empire imperial." But moderation, however admirable it might be, is not a bright and scintillating virtue. "It produces dullness," writes Nehru, "and so the Indian Liberals have unhappily become a 'Dull Brigade' — sombre and serious in their looks, dull in their writing and conversation, and lacking in humour."

But in this category of dullness he made one noble exception. It was Sapru. "Of course there are exceptions and the most notable of these is Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru who, in his personal life, is certainly not dull or lacking in humour and who enjoys even a joke against himself."

In spite of the fact that the Liberals and the Congress drifted far apart, mostly due to the new force called Nehru, Sapru, unlike other Liberals, had always a sneaking admiration for the Congress as Jawaharlal Nehru had for Sapru. And whenever occasion arose Sapru was able to do for Congress what he might not have been able to achieve from within the organisation. His mind was not in the Congress; but his heart was always there. He was too old to change his habits of mind but the warmth of his heart on which Nehru once banked so heavily never left him.

That was how he became the ideal peace-maker. And numberless are the occasions when the lone Liberal helped the Congress cause in the role of the dove bearing the olive branch. The Government thought him safe; the Congress knew he had sympathy. He served on

the Nehru Committee that produced the Nehru Report as a challenge to the Simon Commission. In his old age he made one last effort to frame a new constitution when, after months of great labour, he produced the Sapru Report which no Constituent Assembly will be able to ignore. Perhaps the greatest lawyer next to Motilal Nehru, his services were available to the Congress in the defence of the I. N. A. men even though he was a sick man. He is as proud and fond of Nehru as his father would have been had he lived. And Nehru's one regret must be that just as he converted father he was unable to convert Sir Tej to his Congress.



C. P. RAMASWAMI AIYAR



R. K. SHANMUKHAM CHETTY

Shanmukham Chetty



I REMEMBER the first time I saw Sir Shanmukham Chetty from a safe distance in all the pomp and circumstance of office, over fifteen years ago.

A Chamber in the shape of a perfect segment of a circle; the lower walls panelled with grained rosewood. Large semicircular windows above let in an abundance of soft light that seems to swoop on the people below; the pillars of black marble gleam with lines of light. The patterns of romantic Moghul latticework break the prevalent wooden formality.

It is the Legislative Assembly at New Delhi, the Parliament of India. At the curved desks arranged in semi-circular tiers, at which once had sat Motilal Nehru, Madan Mohan Malaviya, Lala Lajpat Rai, lounge a curious assortment of men supposed to represent India.

In this strange pickle of hand-picked men the eye picks out the most prominent figure, perched on a throne-like seat with an impressive wig, the Speaker of the Assembly. The mind goes back to the first man to adorn this seat: Vithalbhai Patel, a patriarchal personage, old with age and wisdom, an arresting figure with noble features, penetrating eyes, a fine beard, flowing robes and a commanding voice. A great man, a brave soul and a powerful personality. And here before me is a study in contrasts: Sir Shanmukham Chetty, a young man, tall, lithe, clean-shaven, immaculately dressed, proud, happy, alert.

The contrast verges perilously on bathos: here is youth for age; pomposity for personality; dandiness for dignity and sheer grit for real greatness.

This situation of contrasts, not only in the speaker but also those who spoke in the Chamber, was the outcome of the policy of the Congress boycotting the Legislatures. The country was left to voice itself with the thin, feeble, shivering voices of Government nominees with only money or mediocrity to recommend them.

P. G. Wodehouse in one of his Mulliner stories describes the hierarchy of a Hollywood film studio. First there is the Director whose word is first in everything and the last. After him come the yes-men. Below them are the nodders. The function of the yes-men is to say "Yes" to all that the Director says. The business of the nodders is to nod in their turn. The real yes-man and the nodder are, I suppose, born, not made. And to see them there was no better place in India then than the Legislative Assembly.

The Treasury Benches directed. The Yes-men said "Yes": the nodders nodded. The whole thing was first-class entertainment; the farce as unreal and as ridiculous as any that Hollywood could put across.

Here those small nodders, big nodders, champion yes-men nodded to Acts to gag and gore India. They nodded to the Ottawa Agreement. They nodded to the Ordinance Bill. They would have nodded to their death warrants.

The members of the then Assembly no more represented the nation than printers' devils

represent the editorial idea in a newspaper. They were all misprints that had entered the front page. But Chetty had been on the front page with his broad smile, amounting almost to a grin, since 1923. He had almost been an infant political prodigy, for he came to Council straight from College.

Born in October 1892 in Coimbatore, young Shanmukham was educated at the famous Madras Christian College, where he came into local prominence as a student-debater in inter-collegiate debates. While he lived at the Y. M. C. A. in Esplanade Road he came into close contact with the American Secretaries of the Y. M. C. A. from whom he learnt the spirit of equality and fraternity, the policy of directness of approach to problems and the faculty of making people about him realize where they were with him without making them realize where he was with him.

Early in life he mastered the secrets of success with the help of the inherent South Indian shrewdness and the American method of thoroughness and businesslikeness. He never made a promise which he could not redeem: never uttered an argument which he could not prove: never helped anybody whom he could have helped. He always helped himself and others helped him.

All his life he has taken risks, gambled with his future. But at each step he saw to it that he had all the aces in his hand before he took the risk. Thus whenever he resigned a job he had held there was always a bigger job offered to him by the goddess of success whom he always wooed. They came to him; he never went to them.

Even as Shanmukham filled Caithness Hall with his undergraduate oratory the shrewd Lord

Willington spotted him as a winner and made him a political godson out of hand.

With the beginning of the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms Mr. Shanmukham Chetty, a well-groomed figure of 28, of good fortune, walked the floor of the Council at Madras. Soon he was picked out by the local Government to report about measures of Temperance Reform in Bombay, Bengal and the U. P.

Others who sat with him in that council at that time became Ministers. Dr. P. Subbaroyan in fact became Chief Minister. Mr. Chetty was marked out for a Ministry, it seemed clearly written all over his face, as it were. But some urge within him drove him onwards in search of bigger things. Two birds in the bush in Delhi seemed better to him than the one in the hand in Madras.

Thus the well-groomed figure came to the new environment of Imperial Delhi in 1923, having being elected to the Legislative Assembly.

The following year he was one of the members of the Deputation sent by the National Convention to England. In 1926 he visited Australia as Indian representative from the Assembly. The same year he was returned unopposed to the Assembly for the second time. He was the Chief Whip of the Swarajist Party and a lieutenant of Pandit Motilal Nehru. In 1928 we heard of him as adviser to the Indian Employers' Delegate at Geneva, which he monopolised for two more years. On his re-election to the Assembly in 1931 he became a successful juggler in figures and an authority on finance. And also the perfect yesman without a peer. Behold him then at Ottawa at the conference for imperial

preference and coming back home with an agreement that all India laughed at. He was knighted soon after Ottawa "as a reward for his services to the Empire," according to some unkind critics.

When he was elected unopposed to the Chair of the Assembly the Countess of Willingdon is said to have exclaimed: "Why, the Speaker is only a child." But actually he was just forty, an age not old enough to be taken for granted, not too young to be of no consequence. Men who ever become anything have to arrive when forty but not fat. Otherwise they never arrive at all.

Sir R. K. Shanmukham Chetty, K.C.I.E., had sampled so many parties that he was best fitted to be the only non-party man in the House. He had changed his party as surprisingly and as easily as women change their minds, and as brazenfacedly had laid the blame on someone else. In those twenty years Sir Shanmukham had walked from one party to another, as the drunkard from one tavern door to another. From Justice to Independent; from Independent to Swarajist; from Swarajist to Congress; from Liberal to Self-Respect, from thence to nondescript — he had knocked at many doors.

Even as he entered a party, he was edging towards the exit. His faith was ever filigreed with doubt; his loyalty was laminated with licence. He owed allegiance to only one man inside and outside parties, and that was Shanmukham Chetty himself.

A man may change his party once through conviction, twice through courage. But if an ambitious man with a keen head plays leap-frog

with parties more than twice it must be through sheer cussedness. Shanmukham did not care to which party he belonged. He cared too much for himself. And it must be said that the parties seldom cared for him either. It never fell to the lot of any other Indian to be the godson of a Swarajist leader and a Viceroy in one life. It is a unique distinction!

If he has had no faith, he has a blatant brilliance. When he gave up the chance of commanding a portfolio at Madras and went to Delhi it was with self-confidence and assurance enough to conquer a new world. According to an Oriental tradition the swan can suck the pure drops of milk out of even a vast pool of adulterated milk. Sir Shanmukham had the same capacity of drawing out the little truth in an ocean of falsehood, and he grew fat upon it. With an iota of truth he often varnished the worse to make it appear the better reason. He did it with such conviction and vehemence that the layman often murmured: "Methinks there is much reason in his wisdom." It was this dangerous dexterity that was mainly responsible for the Assembly buying a pig in a poke in the Ottawa agreement.

Whatever this Ottawa Knight took into his head, he studied so diligently that what he did not know about it was not worth knowing. He became steeped in his subject as preserved fruit in its syrup. And when his immaculate figure stood up for combat, he gave the idea that others were mere amateurs in the line. He was the only expert. The industry that the Madrasi is noted for all over India was concentrated in the Member from Coimbatore. Even his speeches were prepared with the painstaking

care of an undergraduate. His budget speeches had a certain patent perfection. Not a thing was left to the inspiration of the moment in the scheme of his oratory.

If the sharp, daring intellect, with a colossal self-assurance, preferred an all-India fame to a local name in Madras, and with painstaking work and pleasing ease won what he set out to conquer, his vagabondage in party politics cost him his future. From the pedestal of the Speaker's Chair in the Assembly he climbed down to walk into the wilderness with the calm of a condemned man whose past haunts him.

He had preferred the fleshpots near at hand, to be had in a hurry, to waiting until the land was free. For one thing, the other path was long, strait and arduous. Sir Shanmukham had a convenient aversion to the mortifications of the flesh in politics. Martyrdom had no meaning to him. He did not scan the horizon. Even if he did, as in Madras, the calculating mind calculated wrong. He became the victim of his own brilliant intellect that could argue the worse to appear the better reason. The financier in him liked ready-cash fame. He got paid. He also got paid off.

But Sir Shanmukham's has not been a complete blackout.

When political defeat faced him he was turned into a statesman. The Government of India of the Imperial Regime helped those who helped themselves. In the little state of Cochin, the former Speaker of the Assembly became the Dewan and, like Ulysses after his adventures, meted out unequal laws to a race who knew not him, for six years. He became a bit of a hero

when he hockwinked the Political Department at New Delhi and inaugurated a surprisingly democratic constitution.

The old retainers of the Imperial Regime are never let down. On his relinquishing the Dewan-ship Sir Shanmukham was hustled off to America in charge of the Purchasing Commission during the war years. On his return, there was the Chairmanship of the Tariff Board waiting for him at Bombay.

But Sir Shanmukham was an old retainer with a difference. Right along he was faithful to his country in his own fashion. He did not sell his soul for a salary. Even as the head of the Purchasing Mission in America, he said, writing in *Foreign Affairs*, New York, in 1942: "Every Indian today looks forward to the establishment in his own country of those free political institutions for the preservation of which the great democracies of the world are shedding their blood." He also declared on another occasion: "The European races, and in this I include the Americans, must realize, without any equivocation or mental reservation, that the days of guardianship over the Asiatic people has most decidedly come to an end. In dealing with the Asiatic countries, they can no more indulge in talking about concessions and progress by steps. Whatever might be the drawbacks and the limitations of the Oriental people, they must be allowed to manage their own affairs. There can be no enduring world peace except on these terms."

It was as well that Sir Shanmukham was sent to America for he has always shown a great interest in the country and her people from his young Y. M. C. A. days. He found himself

popular among the Americans whose religion of success in life he himself worships.

Curiously enough, he also has a great admiration for China in whose ancient culture and customs he finds parallels in India. You find him lending Pearl Buck's *Good Earth* and Lin Yutang's *My Country and My People* to friends in order to open their eyes to the Indian kinship with China. He tells a good story in illustrating his enthusiasm for China. Once he told an American woman that Americans had understood China better through Chop Suey and Lin Yutang than through their governments and politicians, to which the lady in question observed: "Oh, yes, I agree with you. I have eaten Chop Suey but not yet Lin Yutang. What exactly is it?" He told her that Lin Yutang was indeed very sweet and more genuinely Chinese than Chop Suey!

He also tells another Chinese story to illustrate the Chinese methods of revenge on enemies. In a military mess at Singapore a Chinese "boy" of uncouth appearance with a bald head was allotted the task of serving after-dinner coffee to British soldiers. When the boy entered the dining room with the tray the soldiers would aim breadcrumbs at his shining head. This practice the boy seemed to take with philosophic calm. Seeing that the boy did not show any resentment at their conduct, the soldiers repented and, at last, one day when the boy entered as usual with the coffee the captain announced: "Well, boy, hereafter we will not throw crumbs at you." The Chinese with the same inscrutable face coolly replied: "Thank you, Sirs. From tomorrow I no make your coffee with gutter water!"

Next to big cigars Sir Shanmukham is fond of Tamil classics. He is a practising journalist, being the editor of a well-known monthly, *Vasantham*, in which he regularly writes popular articles on books like *Silapadikaram*, the 2000 year old Tamil classic.

When I saw him in Bombay in 1946 it was not from such a distance as fifteen years ago in the Legislative Assembly at Delhi. There was less pomp and circumstance of office about him. He did not sit on an august chair placed on a pedestal.

In his flat in Carmichael Road, after dinner, he sat dressed in a *dhoti* in Madras fashion, smoking a cigar, on a comfortable settee. It was nearing midnight. We talked of politics and congressmen, the new order of things, and the great future just dawning.

The room was austere but comfortably furnished. A beautiful Sindh *jhoola*, every inch lacquered with lovely designs, served as a *divan*.

There was no regret in his outlook. One could see he had lived his life and enjoyed the fruits of life when he most wanted them. He had done very well for himself.

But there was a sad touch of the pitiful pensioner about him. This man who might have sat in the seats of the mighty with dignity in a free India had sat too hastily on them betimes, and as a result lived outside the pale, comforting his conscience as best he could, and turning to his Tamil classics for inspiration and as material for research.

I had moved with him for a week, dining at select places, going shopping, seeing pictures. I felt that so kind a host, so admirable a man and so amiable a person would be hard to get.

I wondered for how long he had resigned himself to live outside the pale, a kind of exile in his own country, a friendly nonentity with a famous name. At the hour when India awakes to full nationhood would a hasty summons come to him to keep a tryst with destiny, to sit once again with honour in the seats of the mighty where he had once sat without honour, or would he fade away into the limbo of forgotten things?

To make Shanmukham Chetty a unique political figure who travelled full circle all that is required is a knock by Jawaharlal Nehru, the son, at the door of one who learnt his politics from Motilal Nehru, the father, at the zero hour. Only the devil's own luck—which Shanmukham has in plenty—and wisdom on the part of the Congress (about which one is doubtful) can bring about such a miracle.

C. Rajagopalachariar



AND late in 1945 the clank of heavy keys was heard. The prison doors were flung open, one by one. The whole hierarchy of the High Command walked out once again into the open spaces of Hindustan, mobbed by clamouring crowds and hailed by shouts of "Jai Hind" from Cape Comorin to Kanchanjunga. It was a time of national rejoicing. The August heroes slipped into the Provinces with plenty of ballyhoo to take up the threads where they had left them, to occupy the vacant chairs and take over what was left of Congress offices handed back by Government. Elections were in the air. The atmosphere was expectant and exhilarating. India could weep for joy.

In all this excitement Mr. Chakravarti Rajagopalachariar, the former Madras Premier, was sulking in his tent at Madras. He moved about gingerly.

His position was very much like that of Christopher Robin in Milne's *When We Were Very Young*:

Halfway down the stairs,

Is a stair

Where I sit.

There isn't any

Other stair

Quite like

It.

Halfway up the stairs

Isn't up,

And isn't down.

It isn't in the nursery,

It isn't in the town.

And all sorts of funny thoughts

Run round my head ;

" It isn't really

Anywhere !

It's somewhere else

Instead.

That exactly seemed to be Rajagopalachariar's place in Congress politics.

At the beginning of the August Revolution he was actually upstairs. But this man who had been faithful to the Congress in the minutest detail for twenty five long years, at the crucial time when the gauntlet had been picked up, staked his whole past reputation, emerged out of his cell, and began (holy horrors!) a campaign for Pakistan and a new approach to the Raj! He certainly came down the stairs. If only he had won—that would have been another story. But he lost. In the losing, he did not go the whole hog. He spurned getting down to the very bottom like M. S. Aney or Dr. Khare although there was no place the Raj would have refused him if only they could get the man.

He remained halfway down the stairs. He wasn't up; he wasn't down. It wasn't really anywhere. It was somewhere else instead!

When the defeated man re-joined the Congress it appeared as if he was one of those who like to hunt with the hounds as well as run with the hare. It was curious. The High Command without so much as "Don't do it again" accepted him open arms. It was becoming curiuser. But just when everything seemed to be "working according to plan" there were rumblings. The little men in Madras began to ask inconvenient questions, first in whispers, then in loud voices. It was becoming curiuser and curiuser. The High Command sent Asaf Ali to Madras to calm the clamour for blood and avert political murder in broad daylight. Asaf Ali heard, he talked, he referred to constitutions, he argued — and went back defeated. Mahatma Gandhi himself spoke out his mind in a rather impatient voice. But the desire of the Tom Thumbs adamant on cashing in on the lapse of the one towering personality in their midst could not be allayed. In the babel of opposition three voices could be heard: the Socialist group whose antagonism was solely on ideological grounds. Rajaji being always well to the Right; the Andhra group who found his temporary eclipse a stalking-horse for communal domination, and careerists with plenty of axes to grind and finding a great opportunity to grind them.

When the battle for blood had reached its highest, when the clamour had risen to a climax, when the opposing factions were preparing for the ugliest showdown in domestic Congress history, Rajaji folded up his tent, like the Arab, and silently stole away. His retirement left his supporters bewildered and his opponents flummoxed. It was a total defeat, for even his nominee for the University seat was

rejected by the wiseacres who had the arena now all to themselves. The fade-out of Rajaji was the strangest thing that has happened in domestic Congress politics since Subhas Chandra Bose was deposed after the Haripura Congress. Madras took the bit between its teeth and ran away. Nor could the President of the Congress with his advice bring it back to its senses even after the elections. The moving hand of the Andhras - having writ must pass on. Nor all thy tears nor all thy wit could cancel half a line.

And at Madras lesser men who could never have held a candle to him are striking heroic attitudes to delude themselves that nothing is really the matter. We are to believe that the snail's on the thorn and all's right with the world.

Madras, perhaps the best Congress Province until this sad show, by the way it sent Rajaji packing demonstrated the greatness of the man who had led the Province. The soundness of Madras lay more in the soundness of Rajagopalachariar than in the men whom he led. For the moment the cloistered virtues incapable of action could point their finger at the one lapse of their leader, the game was up. It became a party without a natural leader dealing *in personalities instead of policies*. Dirty linen came out by the basketful to be washed in public. In shame the rest of Congress India kept its eyes averted while peppery Madras with its pecker up chose Barabbas in preference to This Man.

His only fault was that at a time when all had almost lost their heads he kept his and took a more realistic view of what he saw coming. And according to his lights he tried to bridge the widening gulf between the two great communi-

ties on the one hand, and the nation and the discredited Government on the other, despite the frowns of the Congress. - His abdication did not cost him anything. But Madras with Rajagopalachariar was bad enough. What it will turn out to be without him makes one shudder.

In modern times South India has produced many clever men, many brainy men, many charming men and many great men. Cleverness and charm have often combined as in the case of Sir C. P. Ramaswami Aiyar. Brains and cleverness have sometimes mixed together as in Mr. Shanmukham Chetty. Charm and greatness have found abode together sometimes as in the personality of Srinivasa Sastri or Satyamurti. But it is only Chakravarti Rajagopalachariar who is clever, brainy, charming and great, all at the same time, at one fell swoop. A choice assortment of qualities associated with Richelieu, Socrates and Shankaracharya combined to make the most important man in South India who once sulked in the tent like Rustum, retire into the political wilderness.

In spite of all his charm he does not suffer fools gladly. And as a result no political personality, with the sole exception of Sardar Patel, has created so much antagonism to himself as has Rajaji, but on the other hand those who are really sincere and do not make out that their cause is the country's cause for convenience are loyal to him to the point of fanaticism. While he inspires devotion of a rare nature he is not small enough to cover up his tracks with honeyed words and sickly smiles to keep the camp followers always wrapped up in the hope of good things to come.

The courage he displayed in going counter to Congress decisions was equalled only by Subhas Chandra Bose when he formed his Forward Bloc. Even his bitterest enemies will not accuse him of losing his nerve and turning tail for personal reasons at any critical moment. And damning him for his false apostasy cannot be for any other reason than that great minds and petty jealousies go ill together. It cannot be for his expedient policy. For did not Gandhi himself later accept his view and go hat in hand to Malabar Hill fourteen times and come back empty-handed, his status insulted, his faith doubted, his motives questioned?

There is another thing that rouses deep hatred towards Rajaji. The touch of Richelieu in him has given him an exaggerated craftiness that has become a lying legend. His enemies are never disarmed. He is always suspect in their eyes. But it is really a shrewdness that makes him prod the sack before buying peas. The notion that he is too clever by half makes his foes always stay on their guard and attack when his back is turned.

Rajagopalachariar has the darkest pair of glasses on his nose, the largest Adam's apple in his neck, and the biggest head on his shoulders of all the Congress rulers of the Gandhian Empire. His head seems to belong to somebody else, not to his ascetic, emaciated body. The lower lip juts out of the mouth like Voltaire's and the beaked nose gives him a touch of the North Indian. The smile is typical Tamilian.

He took to politics rather late in life, when he had almost finished a brilliant career as a lawyer. But he kept himself well in the background, not as a mere nonentity but as a powerful preacher

tion. He gave no quarter. That was his technique as Premier of Madras. He had thought out each detail. Pat came his retort, in action as well as in word. He cut the ministerial salaries with a firm hand.

Simple in expression, subtle in intention and direct in action, his is a complex personality that has a toughness beyond compare. Parables form the idiom of his speech. This incomparable parable-maker has the personality of a parable himself. He is also a fiction writer of note in Tamil with a chatty, popular style, reeling out short stories with an amazing ardour. He writes learned notes on Francis Thompson's *Hound of Heaven*. He is interested in folklore and art. You find him reading *Robinson Crusoe* in prison and getting religious inspiration from what we consider a children's book. But what shaped his life was *The Trial and Death of Socrates*. In his literary background we also find books like Thoreau's *Duty of Disobedience*, Marcus Aurelius' *Meditations* and John Stuart Mill's *Liberty*. These are the things that made the tough fibre of his forceful personality. The geniality came from the stories he heard from his grandmother and aunts as a child. These same stories he retells now in modern setting to serve his propagandist ends for Gandhian pet theories.

Rajagopalachariar is not one of the best known of our politicians outside India. When he was arrested following Congress resignation of Ministries the Berlin radio announced that the Indian Princes were in revolt against the British and the Raja of Gopalachari had been arrested. But in India itself his name is no

C. P. Ramaswami Aiyar



THAT Brahmin wizard, Sir Chetpat P. Ramaswami Aiyar, first started his wizardry over the Madras public during the days of Mrs. Annie Besant's Home Rule agitation. It was really the titanic Irishwoman who first raised him from a successful lawyer with a dash of brilliance to an all-India figure to be reckoned with.

His friendship with the grand old lady began when the cause celebre over the guardianship of Krishnamurti, the Messiah, ended. Mrs. Besant who had defended herself complimented the young lawyer on the gentlemanly and fair manner he had conducted the case. "But," she added, "I would rather have you on my side after this." The friendship that was born of such curious circumstances was never broken until the old lady's death. Mrs. Besant pushed the young lawyer to the forefront, and Ramaswami Aiyar liked nothing so much as being in the forefront. With Jawaharlal Nehru he was made Joint Secretary of the Home Rule League.

It was at this time that Mr. Edwin Montagu, the Secretary of State for India during World War I, came to India. In Madras, he was anxious to know all about the Indian Home Rule scheme which was the talk of the land at the moment. Ramaswami Aiyar in a few words sketched out the scheme, leaving out the non-essentials and emphasising the principal demands,

meeting each objection as it was raised. Mr. Montagu was highly impressed.

That night he entered in his diary: "After lunch we had Ramaswami Aiyar, who is one of the cleverest men I have ever met in my life. He would do brilliantly in the English Bar. He is very extreme, but very able. He tied us completely into knots."

As a Home Rule Leaguer Ramaswami Aiyar challenged the greatest non-Brahmin leader of twenty five years ago and after a whirlwind campaign which dazed Madras with its fevered activity, prodigality in expenditure and recklessness of daring, won the University seat. The foolhardiness of braving the lion's lair to snatch success out of the jaws of danger was only equalled by the hurricane-like hurry and bustle with which he carried everything before him. He became a tornado on two legs: here, there, everywhere, sparing neither purse nor person, opportunity nor opponent. The amazing driving power combined with the remarkable fascination the public always has for a forceful personality made him romp home in triumph on that unique occasion.

Most public men painstakingly cut the political coat to measure, as it were, according to the cloth, and put it on after years of adjustment and anxiety. But Ramaswami Aiyar has always had ready-made coats to slip into in his long career of careering success. There was a ready-made fortune waiting for him when he chose to be born. It is not possible to believe that he just got born like other people without choosing his parentage with precision. There was a ready-made practice available when he chose to be a

lawyer; which showed how wise he was in the choice of a famous lawyer as his father. There were ready-made places at hand whenever he chose to be a politician. In fact in his case portfolios were as plentiful as packing-cases. There was a ready-made dewanship offered on a platter when he chose to be a statesman. The chief use of Travancore in the scheme of Indian States seemed to be to provide a proper background for his charmed person.

The mountain seemed to be all the while coming to him, instead of his going to it. And before you knew where he was, he knew he was right at the top, hard at work before sunrise, well-groomed and cheerful. He never had to undergo the tedious routine of climbing, rung by rung, from the bottom of the ladder. Somehow, as though by magic, he started right at the top, defying the laws of gravitation that we common men of clay have to obey. He had, therefore, no occasion to kick the ladder by which he never ascended. He has known the joy of arrival without having travelled; of winning the prize without having competed; of reaching the top without having climbed.

It must be admitted that there is hardly any other man in India on whom ready-made clothes fitted so well. In fact he seemed ready-made for the coat rather than the coat for him. If Radhakrishnan typifies the spirit of hospitality of the Indian mind, Ramaswami Aiyar typifies the spirit of accommodation of the Indian person. He has the faculty to make a Procrustean bed of himself and by chopping off and stretching out, adjust himself to the situation. When the mountain comes to him, with a natural charm of manner and mein he takes possession and

immediately sets about making a molehill out of it. Big tasks are child's play to him. In this mighty child's play itself there is a good deal of the ready-made in the technique. His arguments are ready-made and come from stock rather than from spontaneity. His speeches have a ready-made euphony that makes the sounds linger a trifle too long on his tongue. There is a ready-made symmetry about his ponderous sentences, every phrase accompanied by a variant, sometimes two, sometimes three. Even as a congressman his attempt was to give his arguments a stilted literary savour rather than an inspiring quality of injured indignation. His very charm has the quality of the cultured pearl. His well-known generosity has the flavour of a well-hatched plan. The spell he certainly does cast on his followers has the calculated cunning of a net. But hardly any other man gives one the idea of so much spiral movement, distance covered and survival of the fittest after having sat pretty and picked and chosen of the good things that by magic came his way.

Jawaharlal Nehru echoes this idea of soaring prevailing in Ramaswami's mind when he writes in his *Autobiography*: "Some months ago Sir C. P. Ramaswami Aiyar stated in public that I did not represent mass-feeling, but that I was all the more dangerous because of my sacrifices and realism and the fervour of my convictions which he characterised as self-hypnotisation. A person suffering from self-hypnosis can hardly judge himself, and in any event, I would not presume to join issue on this personal matter with C. P. We have not met for many years, but there was a time, long ago, when we were joint secretaries of the Home Rule League. Since then much has happened, and C. P. has

risen by ascending spirals to dizzy heights and I have remained of the earth, earthy. There is little now in common between us except our common nationality. He is today a full-blooded apologist of British rule in India, especially during the last few years; an admirer of dictatorship in India and elsewhere, and himself a shining ornament of autocracy in an Indian State. We disagree about most things, I suppose, but we agree on one somewhat trivial subject. He is absolutely right when he says that I do not represent mass-feeling. I have no illusions on that point."

In this brilliant piece of ironic writing Jawaharlal Nehru sums up in a few sentences the tragedy that has befallen one of the cleverest men that Montagu ever met in his life and one of the most attractive personalities living in Hindustan today. While he imagined he was climbing up, and gave others the idea of movement towards dizzy heights, he has remained very much of the earth, earthy — a draft bull pulling the creaking Imperial cart, scorning in his wisdom the sacrifices and idealism of a Nehru as dangerous and snorting at the fervour of his convictions as "self-hypnotisation." The man who had luck on his side with a family fortune and a founded practice mistook Lord Willingdon for his star and took the wrong turning. The magic power that held out ready-made mantles for him to slip on, provided ladder tops for his perch, was the mysterious force of Imperialism. As in the case of Shanmukham Chetty, Lord Willingdon became in Ramaswami Aiyar's life the Mephistopheles that gave him whatever he asked for. The man who was appointed Law Member of Madras when Lord Willingdon was Governor became Law Member of the Government of India on

Sir B. L. Mitter's going to the League of Nations in 1931 when Lord Willingdon was Viceroy. But neither Ramaswami Aiyar nor the evil genius of his life in his wildest dreams imagined that the dangerous man who did not represent mass feeling would so soon upset the creaking apple-cart. The pity is that the day of reckoning has come for the modern Indian Faustus before he slipped into a Governorship of a Province, the greatest dream of those who sold their soul to the mysterious magic of the imperial force that defied gravitation.

The ready-made Brahmin Satrap shall never find the ready-made gubernatorial robes held out to him, for the curtain (alas) is being rung down on the Imperial Act in which Ramaswami Aiyar played so perfectly the part of "a shining ornament of autocracy in an Indian State." The thoroughness and efficiency with which this prince among lawyers and lawyer among princes lived the part of the autocrat left the whole of India aghast, making his name anathema to 400 millions but dear to the Potentate at Trivandrum and the Proconsul at Delhi whose dirty work he was doing. Here was Machiavelli and Kautilya at their best in the person of a suave, charming and brilliant lawyer who took the law into his own hands when the moment arose, a claimant to a knowledge of mass-feeling who showed as much deference to it as a bull to china in a china shop, a man of exquisite taste who displayed a vulgarity of power that appalled even those without any pretensions to taste.

With the departure of the British from India the erstwhile Dictator, as pert and as proud as any popinjay, becomes the retired draft bull let out to graze. Here they left him (as Ralph

Hodgson's Bull) without a lick, left him for the birds to pick. Perhaps he dreams of the time when he enjoyed Sultan-power, when not another barred his way, not another that erred dared a second, worse rebuke, dared a second fight and fall. We, in a way, pity him, this dupe of dreams, once again the visionary leader of the herd that once he led in his splendid yesterday, as he turns to meet the loathly birds flocking round him waiting for the flesh that dies.

Amaranath Jha



THE time: 1933. The scene: Allahabad. As the hour approaches ten in the morning a mass of youthful humanity surges onwards through the portals of the University of Allahabad. Bicycles meander with mazy motion. Motor-bicycles rush through with a roar. Lady-students arrive most elegantly in tongas. Soon the soft whir of high-powered cars is heard. And one by one, the professors swerve through the big gates, some rolling in sedan-cars, one of which, that belonging to Dr. Shafaat Ahmed Khan, the Professor of History, is upholstered with red plush.

There also arrives one of those curious contrivances, now fast disappearing, looking like a darkly painted Nice biscuit tin on four wheels drawn by two shaggy ponies. Inside this most unimportant-looking carriage sits the most important man of the University—the Vice-Chancellor, Mahamahopādhyaya Dr. Ganganath Jha.

Dressed in almost rustic artlessness, steeped in a sense of silence and slow time, with an intent gaze into the blue beyond, Dr. Ganganath Jha for ten years lived an exile in his own University. In one of those ancient Indian universities like Taxila or Nalanda, he would have been just the thing. But in an-ultra modern Indian institution like Allahabad he seemed to be a stranger in a strange land, strayed in by mistake—a kind

of clean-shaven Rip van Winkle in tight pyjamas of grey flannel.

That was the father.

But behold the son, Amaranath, a mere Lecturer in English. He arrives at the University rolling in a high-powered car, looking like an enormous Western tailor's dummy in the flesh, the trousers well-creased, the tie just so, the shoes well-polished. He does not enter the lecture-room; he bursts in. He does not lecture; he passes pronouncements. Wherever he goes he takes possession of the scene. He dominates the University. Even senior professors pay deference to him. There is a touch of the polished goonda in him that makes men fear him.

There was as much difference between the father and the son as there was between a Vedic hymn and a modern brass band. It was said that he wielded enormous influence. He cast his net wide. A big-made man, like a Sikh without a beard, his name meant weight in more than one sense of the word. He could make or break anybody in the University on his own right—not with the weight of his father. He was a man to be reckoned with.

All mankind can be divided into two classes—those who are like rotten eggs and those who are like deep waters. You need not eat the whole egg to say whether it is rotten. But you must dive to the bottom to be sure how deep water can be.

A few minutes with the first type will enable you to weigh and balance and pass judgment. A whole lifetime of superficial contact with the second type might not give you enough data to put on a pin-head.

And perhaps that was why after many years of contact with Amaranath Jha, many people went away carrying with them, not a portrait, but only a silhouette of him in their minds. For he was always posing, — profile-wise, against the sun, giving you only the bold outlines, hard and dark and sombre — one side of a masked man, if you please.

There is an old story of how one day that absurd genius Theodore Hook meeting a pompous stranger in the street accosted him with the question: "Excuse me, Sir, but are you somebody in particular?"

That I believe was the silhouette that Amaranath Jha presented to the superficial eye — a pompous individual who thought he was somebody in particular.

But if one dared the deep waters, one found somebody quite different.

A man who could study Shakespeare and yet could enjoy P. G. Wodehouse; who could see Charlie Chaplin in the movies without calling him the greatest tragedian; who could fleet the time carelessly as they did in the golden age at a picnic party; who could make you laugh at a joke and yet did not think it was the only joke in existence; who would help you whenever he could without expecting you to shampoo his legs; who could feel sorrow in silence and yet could show good, hearty mirth with gusto; who could pity and yet not be pathetic about it; — in short, one who was sophisticated and yet unspoilt by knowledge, learned but not bookish, cultured and yet unsnobbish at heart, — that is the portrait that I got when the details of the silhouette were filled in and the man was seen in



ANANDA K. COOMARASWAMY



AVARANATH JHA

the light of intimacy against which he always sat sideways.

Popular fancy pictures the university professor as a shabby old man, unkempt and untidy, absurdly absentminded and hopelessly out of touch with the common affairs of the world, engrossed in pedagogic details with a sweet forgetfulness. If ever a professor belied this fabulous myth of popular fancy it is Amaranath Jha. He looks more like a successful bank-manager than a shabby professor. And he carries with him, not the feeble absent-minded meekness of the college don, but the seeming audacity of a Roman conqueror.

Not a man to be tampered with. No, Sir. And most certainly not a man to be made the butt of college yarns that would be spun out after the roll-call bell had been rung for the night and the tea-cups were scattered about the floor. The most dare-devil would think twice before they trampled on his corns. And whenever one became foolhardy and did offend him even unconsciously, one remembered prayers that one thought one had clean forgotten. For the most part, his chief weapon was his piercing wit.

Prof. Jha, like most teachers, never liked men coming late for his lectures. On one occasion he was lecturing in an over-crowded room when there entered a belated shape of bulky build. We all held our breath. He paused and looking largely over all our heads said: "Each one of these benches can hold five men — and is there one which has only two?" At which all eyes were focussed on the one bulky shape that was allotted three men's places. I do not believe that young gentleman was ever again late to his lectures.

"I have enough rivals outside the class-room; I want no rivals here," he once said. Not that he objected to honest doubts and legitimate questions. But he had a sharp eye for cheekiness which he always scotched with evident self-indulgence. And those bright ones who ever tried to heckle him always found they had caught a Tartar.

One day, he was explaining to a class the passage from Stevenson: "I still remember that Emphyteusis is not a disease, nor stillicide a crime....." When he thought he had said the last word on the subject he went on to the next passage. A bright young lad—and this time, too, a very, very fat one—who thought he was extra clever, got up and asked: "Sir, could it not be that Stevenson used the word Emphyteusis purposely to confuse the reader with the disease Elephantiasis?" Mr. Jha looked luxuriantly at him for half a second and smiled faintly. "Well," he said, "he might have wanted to confuse us with associations of many other diseases, but naturally enough one thinks of one's own."

To most of his students he was kindness itself. But it was a kindness that had the sound of a distant drum—aloof and unemotional to all outward appearance. He was out to give them a good time. He liked to see them happy. And the cakes swallowed and the tea drunk in a perspiring ecstasy under his auspices at his house, "Mithila," every year, must have been enormous. Of an evening, in his garden or drawing-room, after tea, smoking a friendly cigarette, he would uncork himself in gay laughter, as jokes were carried away by the wind and repartee played like lightning in a kind of verbal shorthand.

Yet at his breeziest, communion with Mr. Jha was like skating on thin ice. You never knew when the ice would give way. You had to be always on your guard against a ducking.

There was then a young man from foreign parts whose mother-tongue is not Hindi. At tea, one summer evening with Mr. Jha, I remember him saying: "Sir, I read Hindi poetry." Mr. Jha, eyeing him with quiet mischief, said with a loud guffaw: "Then, Sir, on behalf of Hindi Poetry, I thank you."

One always felt a certain weakness in the knees in his presence. One felt as though his gaze were slowly burning one's skin; as though his words were stealthily entering into one's bones.

Mr. Jha has one of the most delightful private libraries in Allahabad — perhaps in the province. And he enjoys few things as much as browsing in it, especially on a Sunday morning, dressed in his dressing-gown with the cord tied tightly round his abundant waist.

Yet he never carried the mustiness of books into his daily life; the smell of yellowing leaves was never felt in his talk with laymen. There was about him that air of the man of the world that is so comforting. You felt you were talking to a man not to an expert, to a mortal not to a myth.

That was why perhaps it was his lot to hear the troubles, the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune of most of his students. It came most natural for them to come to him with all their woes. He was more to be blamed than they. For they knew their tale would be heard with sympathy and the needful done.

If walls had tongues what curious tales we would hear from those of Mr. Jha's rooms—financial troubles, illnesses of distant relatives, romantic surgings of the heart, adventurous longings, of ambition, and doubts of conscience!

Through it all, the man himself sat, against the sun, a silhouette, with masked emotions and corked-up laughter, posing for the picture that many people carried away with them when they left College. But those who sounded the depths could touch the bottom.

We knew that Amaranath Jha would go very far—and was in some great hurry about it. But the pace he set himself astounded even those who knew the winning horse when they saw it. Soon after Dr. Ganganath Jha retired the son, a mere boy as Indian Vice-Chancellors go, aspired to get into his father's shoes! But somehow or other things did not turn out as planned, and Mr. Iqbal Narain Gurtu, that fine courtier from Benares, became Allahabad's Vice-Chancellor.

But a miss was not as good as a mile in this case. And when Gurtu retired Amaranath Jha, the superman of "Mithila", became the youngest, but one of the most efficient, Vice-Chancellors in India.

A big man with big ideas, he has developed Allahabad into a giant university. One of the first residential universities in the country, he has given it an atmosphere that is unique.

With the assumption of real power the mock slapping of the biceps ceased. As the years sped by he emerged from many a fray not only unscratched himself but also without inflicting a scratch on others. He has the faculty to

distinguish the design from the details; the tremendous from the trivial. Like his father.

Though not one whit a savant of the type that Radhakrishnan is, Dr. Jha has a greater appeal to the scholastic world. His name is a familiar word in any university in India. For very few university men have so wide a circle of friends of all sorts. No celebrity comes to Allahabad but pays a visit to "Mithila." For among scholars such a fine mixer, perhaps a little too conscious of his charm, is rare.

But the Jhas are not made of the stern stuff that makes martyrs. Dr. Jha, like his father, has viewed the eventful moments of a strenuous time in the country as the passing storms in an alien state, with an apparent calm, the while keeping his lips closed and his hands folded.

Ananda K. Coomaraswamy



THE Ceylonese are an insular, child-like people, easily pleased with their doings and mighty proud of what they can call their own. Anything new but a little out of the ordinary in the Island—a new cinema, a broad road, a tall building—but becomes “the best in the East.” It is even said that once a Ceylonese called the new University of Ceylon “the best in the East,” and added naively: “of course, excepting those in foreign countries.”

But usually they are oblivious to and unaware of what they can legitimately be proud of. The ancient irrigation system of the country, for instance, is a phenomenon over which any people might stretch out their chests. Then there is the modern phenomenon of Dr. Ananda Kentish Coomaraswamy.

While the whole world from China to Chile has bowed in rapt veneration for over a quarter of a century before this mighty giant only Ceylon has been vaguely unconscious that such a person even exists, let alone realizing that he is a Ceylonese.

In the middle of the last century, when an egotistic Whig aristocracy devoid of sentiment and a merciless middle class absorbed in the pursuit of new wealth were crushing beneath an unyielding mechanism the defenceless British people, a young man from Ceylon crashed into London Society. He was soon hobnobbing with the greatest in the land, particularly Lord

Palmerston, Lord Tennyson, and Benjamin Disraeli, later Lord Beaconsfield, who were fascinated with this mysterious young Hindu talking philosophy but learning law. When Disraeli wrote his novel *Tancred* it was found that the young Hindu from Ceylon was one of the important characters in the book, in which the author openly held out to troubled, diseased Britain the vision of the Holy East, India of the Rishis, where the source of inspiration never runs dry.

The young Hindu who made such a deep impression on the mind of a future Premier of England as to be the model for a character in a book was the father of Dr. Ananda Coomaraswamy, Muttu Coomaraswamy, who on his return to Ceylon served as the Tamil member in the Island's Legislative Council in the eighteen sixties and ended up with a knighthood. His nephews, the late Sirs Ponnambalam Arunachalam and Ramanathan, both followed in the footsteps of their uncle; only the son, Ananda Coomaraswamy, was a man of a different mould.

Today Coomaraswamy is without a peer as a scholar among Orientalists. It would be a great discovery if one could find another like him anywhere in the whole world, whose studies and publications cover as wide a range and are at the same time as numerous in quantity as excellent in quality. The place he occupies in the Oriental Art world is something like the position accorded to Mahatma Gandhi in the Indian political field.

He seems to be a combination of Marco Polo, Ibn Batuta and Fa Hien in his scholarly wanderings across Asia in search of Research.

There seems to be hardly any subject worth while connected with any corner of Asia that he has not studied, mastered and expounded. He is as much an expert in philosophy as he is an adept in religion; as much a master of metaphysics as he is an authority on mythology or geology. But these subjects are merely sidelines in his absorbing erudition.

It is in the realm of Oriental Art that he reigns supreme. There are other scholars, great in their own way, who have studied particular aspects or periods of development of Oriental Art in India or elsewhere. But Coomaraswamy is the only stalwart who takes in his stride the whole of Asia. His mind has probed, his fingers have caressed, or his eyes have examined and appreciated the arts and crafts, sculpture and music, dance and drama of most countries in the East. India itself he has covered almost province by province, period by period, piece by piece.

He has gone straight to the original sources and given first hand, straight from the horse's mouth as it were, the vision he has witnessed. That in itself would not have won for Coomaraswamy the absentee Maha-Art-Maship of the Oriental World of Culture. He has the temperament, the training and the talent to put forward in clear-cut and uncompromising terms what he has seen and learnt first hand so that it sounds true as a theorem in geometry and as inspiring as a revelation of a prophet.

From that year in 1900 when as a young man of 23 he saw with a thrill his first paper on "Ceylon rocks and graphite" in print in the *Quarterly Journal of the Geological Society*, to 1947, his seventieth year, he has written more

than five hundred publications, some bulky monumental works like *Medieval Sinhalese Art* and *A History of Indian and Indonesian Art*, other slimmer volumes of fair size and the rest pamphlets and papers in the best learned magazines of the world.

For the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (14th edition) alone he has written eight articles; on Indian and Sinhalese Art and Archaeology; Indian Architecture; Indonesian and Further Indian Art; Iron in Art; Textiles and Embroideries in India; Bronze and Brass Ornamental Work in India and Indonesia; Dance in India; and Yakkas. Time was when the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* entirely ignored Indian and Asian Art — up to its 13th edition. This was perhaps because there was no outstanding authority who could deal with the subjects. Coomaraswamy put India and Asia on the art map of the world. He also wrote on Indian Dance, Architecture and Art in the *National Encyclopaedia of America* in addition to editing the English words of Indian origin in Webster's *New International Dictionary*.

Profuse writing in itself is nothing very remarkable. What is really astounding in Coomaraswamy is the quality that accompanies this quantity. Extraordinary profundity of study, originality in research and brilliant insight into the heart of things combined to make anything written in his yet marvellously firm and beautiful handwriting a deep influence on both scholars and spiritually awakened laymen all over the world.

His books, memoirs (in the learned sense of the word), articles and monographs have been published not only in India, Ceylon, England

and America but also in France, Germany, Finland, Holland and Rumania in translation.

In whatever country in the world, whenever the subject of Indian Art comes up, scholar and student, expert and layman, all have one name in mind as an authority: Dr. Ananda Cōomaraswamy.

As Spenser was the Poet of Poets, Coomaraswamy is the Critic of Critics. He is the model, the authority for half a hundred other top-rank critics of Oriental Art. Most of his books, expensive in production, have been published in small editions at very high prices and are found mostly in public libraries. It is from these beautifully produced books that other famous connoisseurs seek inspiration and instruction and learn the rudiments of art and the philosophy and theory of Oriental beauty and broadcast them to a waiting world. Show me the art connoisseur or critic who does not acknowledge his debt to Coomaraswamy and I shall look upon the specimen with pity. His precise language is so concise, packed with matter and condensed to such an extent that Mulk Raj Anand has expanded one chapter from *The Dance of Siva* to a respectable book entitled *The Hindu View of Art*.

He is firstly a scholar; secondly a scholar; thirdly a scholar. He deals with questions of Asian aesthetics invariably in the particular, focussing undivided attention to bring the special characteristics of a type of Art into sharp relief. Never does he present personal ideas or novel theories. The task he sets himself is discovering the truth and stating the principles he discovers by which particular cultures rise,

decline, fall and rise once again or remain for ever fallen. He gives the philosophy of the beautiful as conceived by artists in different countries and different times from sources none may question with the accuracy of the trained scientist.

For, originally, Coomaraswamy, the Doctor of Science of London University, was a scientist out and out. He started his life as a geologist at the beginning of this century and carried out for the Ceylon Government a mineralogical survey of the Island from 1903 to 1906 as first Director.

When the young Director of the Survey who could write a "Note on the Occurrence of Corundum as a Contact-Mineral at Pont Paul near Morlaix, Finistère" in the *Journal of the Geological Society* turned to something nearer home and addressed an *Open Letter to the Kandyan Chiefs* in not so unemotional words pointing out the utter neglect of their artistic heritage due to the mimic imitation of the West, and followed it up by an article in the *Ceylon National Review* on "Anglicization of the East," there were frozen frowns on the brows of the colonial tin gods who sat guarding Imperial interests in the seats of the mighty in the little crown colony. Young Coomaraswamy was not to be curbed in that manner. With other stalwarts like the late Mr. W. A. de Silva and Sir Ponnambalam Arunachalam, a movement was initiated for a system of national education, teaching of Sinhalese and Tamil in all schools and the encouragement of national culture, history and art. It has taken nearly fifty years for Ceylon to achieve what Coomaraswamy campaigned for in his twenties. But the earnest

young man with a scientific turn of mind but a pulsating heart for the pearls of a cultural heritage which the swine of those days spurned was shown that he was not wanted in Ceylon. Thus it was that from then till now, the most famous Ceylonese in modern times, Ceylon's only world personality, has lived in exile from the land of his birth, away from the things he loves, in America as a Fellow for Research in Indian, Persian and Mohamedan Art at the Museum of Fine Art at Boston.

It may be that if Coomaraswamy had stayed behind and adapted his warm enthusiasms to the decadent atmosphere of the days of colonial slavery he might have become at best a local celebrity in a turban like his cousins the late Sirs Ponnambalam Arunachalam and Ramanathan. But with his departure his stature grew into a personality of world importance in the realm of Asian Art.

But before he left the Island he had done the greatest service any cultural crusader could have done for the land of his origin: he had finished *Mediaeval Sinhalese Art*, a monumental work in which he has most faithfully recorded the folk-art forms of the Sinhalese before they disappeared. The bulky volume, a by-product of his wanderings as a geologist in search of mineralogical resources, is in the nature of a dying disposition of a fast sinking culture before it was done to death by the onslaughts of a foreign civilization.

In this testament of beauty of 400 double royal pages with 50 full page plates and innumerable line illustrations secured with the greatest difficulty, the author deals with the

history, social economy and all art forms of the Sinhalese with examples. After recording all that is worth recording, Coomaraswamy gives the history of Sinhalese art, which in itself is one of the most brilliant pieces of research he has ever done.

While explaining to the culturally blind Sinhalese the beauties of their own art Coomaraswamy gives in this book in a nutshell the difference between Oriental and Occidental Art, which is an example of his lucid, clear, precise prose in which he hits the nail on the head:—

“The most essential character of Kandyan painting as of Kandyan design in general, is its idealism. This idealism belongs to all Indian Art; but in Kandyan Art it appears in almost an extreme form.....

“We shall understand the idealism of Indian and Sinhalese art as well from a study of the Barahat or Kandyan trees, as in any other way. There are two ways of seeing a tree; at first glance or a photograph, it strikes us as an irregular growth of branches and leaves, producing a confused effect of light and shade. We soon learn to distinguish more than this and to tell one kind of tree from another. But as we consider more deeply a number of trees of different kinds we realize that each has, as it were, a law of its being; its leaves have a certain manner of growth, its flowers a particular symmetry. Each actual tree seems to be an incarnation or embodiment of some more perfect and rhythmical idea of the tree. This idea it is the aim of art to reveal.

“A good example of the idealistic treatment is afforded by the lotus... The simple lotus

form represents the Ideal form of all lotuses.... It carries the emotion of all lotuses compressed into one abstraction.....The impulse to the impression of emotion in art is born of the sense of unity of all life, the recognition of the many in the one. The representation of ideal forms, the reduction of various complex appearances to their simplest terms is an expression of the desire to see the one in the many."

Mediaeval Sinhalese Art was the first of a series of over thirty memorable books on Oriental Art by which he guided his readers on to the threshold of a new wonder world where with sensibility and patience they were made at home as he disengaged its intrinsic character. He made it accessible by stating the philosophy of Asian work and illustrating it by selected examples all unquestionably of the highest quality of their kind.

"To know Indian Art in India alone is to know but half its history," writes Sir John Marshall. To tell a story in the round, as it were, Coomaraswamy, in his *History of Indian and Indonesian Art*, follows its trail over the great passes to Central Asia; he watches it assuming new forms and breaking into new beauties as it spreads over Tibet, China, Burma and Siam; he gazes in awe at the unexpected grandeur of its creations in Cambodia, Java and Sumatra; he sees it encountering a different racial genius, a different environment in Japan and under its influence taking on a unique garb. In each country he delves deep into the limbo of forgotten ages, as he does in India itself, giving examples of each style, age and country in reproductions.

In this 400 page volume with 100 full page illustrations Coomaraswamy proves the living

and prepare the mind for a better understanding and readiness for appreciation. It was not enough to enable them to admire only what happened to appeal to their taste at first sight. Such liking may be based on purely accidental qualities or even on complete misunderstanding. He showed them, as to kindergarten children, typical and great Asian art, and then told them how to understand and appreciate it. He told them that no art was exotic or quaint in its own environment, and as long as such feeling existed they were far removed from properly understanding what was put before them.

To bring about this understanding and sympathy Coomaraswamy puts down in precise terms what is art from the Eastern point of view. It is not (as the Westerner thinks) an individual creation, produced only by persons of peculiar sensibility, working in well-lit studios and driven by an irresistible urge to self-expression. It is, on the contrary, a form of civilization, produced by trained professional craftsmen, a statement informed by ideal beauty. Statement is the body; beauty the soul. These cannot be divided into separate entities. A work of art is both an occasion for ecstasy and the fulfilment of a utilitarian purpose, sacred or secular, in an age for which it was meant, for a people for whom it was meant. We can understand without effort and at first sight only the art of our day and place. But the more absolute the beauty of an alien work, the more fully it is what it was intended to be, the less intelligible will be its functioning. But to call it, therefore, mysterious, quaint or grotesque would be only giving our own ignorance ugly names. Such works were never obscure for those for whom they were originally meant.

Coomaraswamy gives the explanations required, the background necessary to enable the idle mind to recognize beauty in the unfamiliar, and disintegrates those prejudices that stand in the way of free responses and activity of the cultured spirit. He establishes conditions which make it possible for the mind to acknowledge ungrudgingly the splendour of the work itself, to relish its beauty or even its grace.

A bibliography of his work on art alone would fill 20 pages. But his studies for 40 years have not been confined to art only. He has touched many subjects connected with Eastern culture that would make it easier for the Westerner to understand the East and the Easterner to realize the greatness of his own heritage. In all his books and writings, through all the dispassionate, scientific language runs a message of co-operation through fellowship, understanding and sympathy between East and West as equals.

The aim of *Buddha and the Gospel of Buddhism* is to set forth as simply and as clearly as possible the message of the Buddha according to the Buddhist scriptures and to make pointed reference to the part which Buddhist thought has played in the development of Asian thought and to suggest the significance it may still possess for modern thinkers. Here are set down definite statements which must be either true or false and a clearly defined goal which the West must either accept or reject. At a time when the Western world is beginning to realize that it has failed to attain the fruits of life in a society based on competition and self-assertion Coomaraswamy points out the profound significance in the message of Asian

thought where it is affirmed with no uncertain emphasis that the fruits of life can only be attained in a society based on the conception of the moral order and mutual responsibility. He illustrates by a single quotation the marvellous directness and simplicity of the social ethic to which the psychology of Buddhism affords sanction and which has great significance for the warring nations: "Victory breeds hatred, for the conquered is unhappy." The supreme tenderness and compassion associated with the Buddha is brought out by a passage in the Ruru-deer Jataka where the Bodhisatva asks: "Who would willingly use harsh speech to those who have done a sinful deed, strewing salt, as it were, upon the wound of their fault?"

He thus has a meaningful message, an implied injunction suitable for the modern Western world, in which he has lived most of his life, in his studies be they on ethics or art, philosophy or religion.

Even in his *Myths of the Hindus and Buddhists* his aim, most apparently, is to relate in a manner close to the original such myths as are familiar to every educated Indian so that the foreigner who desires to understand India will have the essential knowledge of the cultural background of folk tales that goes to the making of the modern Indian.

But Coomaraswamy is not merely an interpreter of India to the West but very much more: the inspiration of a new race of Indians who are no longer anxious to be anglicised, convinced that real progress must be based on national ideals, national culture, and national individuality based on these.

He made us open our eyes to the beauty, the grandeur, the glory around us. We who thought we were primitive he ennobled. He rescued us from poverty by digging deep and discovering treasures we never thought we had. From blindness to light, from poverty to riches, from darkness to sunshine Coomaraswamy delivered us.

Jai Prakash Narain



THE fame of Jai Prakash Narain has the ring of a rumour. It is spread everywhere and is so strange that one is tempted to take it with a pinch of salt. He amalgamates in his person associations and atmosphere of Karl Marx, Shivaji and the Scarlet Pimpernel. His name thrills multitudes of bottled-up young men, hankering for adventure, to whom he is a deliverer armed with an invincible might to revive the spirits of just men long opprest. He is the centre of a circumference of a new race of Indians who have arisen under the inspiration of a world-citizen like Jawaharlal Nehru, each of them a hero or heroine in his or her own right: Ram Manohar Lohia, Yusuf Meherally, Minoo Masani, Achut Patwardhan, Asoka Mehta, Usila Mehta, Kumi Dastoor. These young men and women represent the best that is in Indian nationalism with whatever is good in Western materialism. Large-hearted, spirited, they are the youth who have come to teach while age will stay on to listen. They are impatient. They are kicking their heels all the time. They see visions of a new India. They long to see their dreams coming true.

lad in Sitabdiava living far from cities and sights of men with the sunshine and the moon's delight of the Satara District. He saw the modern miracle of a tramcar for the first time when he went to Calcutta at the age of eighteen for his studies. But it was another wonder to the inner eye that stole his heart away, more romantic to him than Chimborazo, Cotopaxi and Popocatepetl. This was Satyagraha. When the burning moment broke, Jai Prakash found that all things else, including college biology, were out of his mind and the joy of battle in the Non-Cooperation Movement made him blind with an unknown frenzy. When the Movement was called off he married, handed over the political education of his bride to Gandhi at his Ashrama, packed up his meagre belongings and set sail for America.

For eight years he roved through the United States sampling many universities, many subjects, many occupations. Now a farm labourer, now a waiter, now a salesman, Jai Prakash earned his tuition fees and put in lectures at one time at the University of Wisconsin, at another (among others) at Ohio. He gave up biology for mathematics, studied psychology, economics and sociology. But he drank deepest of Marxism even as he saw life in the raw, a madness for roving running in his blood. In the meantime much water was flowing under the bridge of Hoogli unaware that a new force was being worked up in the school of hard life and laborious days on the fruit farms of the wild West in America.

Jai Prakash returned to India and his wife in 1929 feeling like a ticking time-bomb. Gandhi found him "an authority on socialism." And

Jawaharlal Nehru, all admiration for the young communist, gave him a job of work after his own heart when he was asked to organise and set up a Labour Research Department for the Congress. It was during the months in the Labour Department that other young firebrands listened to this serious young man with the double vision of an independent as well as a socialist India. Though communist at heart he looked askance at the Indian communists who opposed the Congress on ideological grounds ignoring the immediate object of independence. On the other hand, though he had always been a flaming nationalist he felt that the Congress ideal of political independence was not enough unless hitched to the star of economic liberation. When clapped in Nasik Central Jail he found his new friends like Masani and Patwardhan around him. Here, as the slow hours ached through the months, was conceived the new Congress Socialist Party, combining the ideals of the Congress and the communists — political freedom along with economic freedom. When he walked out of prison in 1933 he had found his feet; his programme was well chalked out; he was friend-proud and full of optimism.

The Congress Socialist Party, started with the blessing of Nehru, set a new pace for the Congress, goading it forward and not allowing it to revert to Liberal, easy ways. As the leader of the Congress Socialists he tried to rope in all leftist elements to the Congress and at one time admitted the communists as well. But it was a thankless, fruitless task. One by one the guest-leftists left leaving Jai Prakash high and dry, to fight his own battles with the Congress. He tore his way through the country organising

his Party and making it a live force — fighting the Congress from within but never losing allegiance to it.

Often his criticism of the Congress had a touch of impudence. Though there was perhaps a little too much youthful exuberance, dramatic gestures and extravagance of energy, it was patent that what he sought for was a little light to carry into the homes, dark and dank with misery, in every corner of India. Little he desired for himself, but everything for the new party so that when freedom is achieved the country will be on the threshold of socialism. His socialists were out for direct action which, some thought, they did not know the implications of. Many attempts were made to crush the Socialist Party. The old brigade got the jitters. Sardar Patel shouted at Haripura: "Let me make it clear that we have tolerated you for two years, but the time has come when we shall no longer tolerate you. We shall now give it back in your own coin."

But the Congress cannot do without young men. For minus young blood Congress would be a moribund organisation. The socialists may have lost once; they have not lost the battle for ever.

When the War broke out Jai Prakash Narain spoke out loud and bold: "No Indian can permit the resources of his country to be utilized to buttress up imperialism and to be converted through the processes of the war into the chains of his country's slavery." Soon he was locked up. But his tireless spirit can never be tethered. For 23 days he went on hunger strike to draw attention to the treatment meted out to political prisoners. Soon after Jai Prakash had gained

his point the Government of India published what became one of the most talked-of documents in India. This was said to be an atrocious letter written by Jai Prakash and handed over to his wife but intercepted by the Government. This was a sensation. Just when the letter was proved to be a forgery Jai Prakash showed that it was not only the Raj who was capable of sensations.

On the festive Diwali Day, 1942, the sirens of Hazaribagh Jail rent the air at dead of night. Jai Prakash had broken jail! India was thrilled. It might be mentioned that Hazaribagh Prison is one of the best guarded in India, otherwise Jai Prakash would not have been there. While the guards unbent a little and enjoyed the good things going Jai Prakash with five others climbed over the walls using their *dhotis* as ropes and headed for the surrounding jungle of Chota Nagpur. Then was enacted one of the grimmest man-hunts that have ever taken place as the fugitives played hide and seek with the guards, police and military in the thick jungle, infested by wild creatures, which was being cordoned off and combed tree by tree. How the party of six ever eluded the clammy hands groping in the darkness of Diwali night in the dense bush no one knows. But for three days and nights the unrelenting man-hunt went on.

A fifty-six-mile walk with their tell-tale wounds swathed in strips of their own dhotis brought them to the Gaya District and the first taste of food for three days. Here the party followed several ways. Jai Prakash stole into Ramgarh some days later and hired a boat to Benares. It was twilight when he reached the ghats of Kashi; many people met him in the

streets but no man knew him. So he went straight to a dear friend, as did Coriolanus to the house of Tallus Aufidius. He sat himself down and spoke not a word to any man. But though his face was all muffled over with a beard and his body was emaciated beyond recognition there was a certain familiar majesty in his face that prevented the people of the house from turning him out. When the friend came out to find out who this strange "Muslim" beggar was he unmuffled himself and revealed his real self to the head of the house who was marvelously glad and took him by the hand.

But there was no time for feasting at that house at Benares. Jai Prakash's mind was afire. Schemes buzzed in his head. From Benares he started his now famous career of the "demned illusive Scarlet Pimpernel" — that brought bewildered joy to his followers, every time outwitting the police, flying from Province to Province, now in the Punjab, now in Bengal, now in the United Provinces, changing disguises and aliases almost every week. He became in more than the metaphorical sense the moving spirit of the Revolution. He put heart into the guerrilla bands in all parts of India by his dashing deeds of courage and inspiring words of fire. The Government of India put a price of Rs. 10,000 on his head. The police were hot on his trail but he was quicker by half. His name became a mantram to his loyal band who found in him a personal magnetism that drew them to him willy nilly. Ballads were written round his exploits, hair-raising and breath-taking, that astounded a sub-continent and made men expand their chests in pride. His instructions and notes on how to carry on the resistance movement

from underground became the Bible of the young men whose hands itched for action.

At last he made a slip. When the news of his re-arrest was announced a shiver ran down the spine of India. As rumours of torture trickled out of the jail millions felt vicariously the pain that this Indian socialist Scarlet Pimpernel and twentieth-century Shivaji underwent at the hands of the not too tender-hearted authorities as a penance for his audacity, daring, courage and cuteness.

When the Congress leaders were released they found they walked in a different land, of people desperate for struggle, straining upon the start. They were amazed by the new spirit surging across the country. It was Jai Prakash who was the author of this new spirit, this new unrest, this new impatience, this out and out ferocity of purpose.

When he was arrested at the outbreak of the war he was but a rough sketch of a young hopeful. He emerged after the war a full-size portrait of a patriot done in suffering. His name had the sound of a clarion call to action. He was hurriedly ushered into the pantheon of the modern gods of India and placed side by side with Gandhi and Nehru and Sardar Patel. But he refuses homage as we refuse charity. He is always getting down from the pedestal and hobnobbing with the disreputable.

When Sir Stafford Cripps requested him to meet the Cabinet Mission he declined the honour. He had no faith in missions, Parliamentary or Cabinet. He prepared for the next struggle. He made plans. He warned the Congress even as they met in Simla to form an Interim Government.

He looks ahead at the lowering clouds overhead. He is always scanning the horizon. He is ever on the alert. He is invariably a-quiver. Cosmopolitan in outlook, broad in vision, well-versed in the theories of modern economics, commanding in personality, arresting in person, he is the one man who can one day take the place of Nehru himself in the affections of the people. If something dramatic or astounding happens in India you will know it is neither lightning nor thunder. It is merely Jai Prakash Narain, the man of the people, the hero of the nation.

C. K. Nayudu



THE historian of future ages, while looking back on our times, will wonder at the place of the ball in the day-to-day life of modern civilized man. Although the ball was known to humanity as far back as the times of the Pharaohs, it was left to the twentieth century of the West to turn it into a wanton idol and worship it with a barbaric splendour. The British Empire was won on the playing fields of Eton, it is said, and today the ball always follows the flag.

India, leaving international championships and the battering of the ball to others, has been in the running for breaking records in fasts and rigorous imprisonments. But in spite of circumstances, almost absent-mindedly she has produced sporting heroes, like an all-too-fertile mother.

For instance, there was "Ranji", the Jam Saheb of Nawanagar—a personified heroic legend—who nearly forty years ago stirred the hearts of games worshippers. His nephew, Duleepsinhji, the prince charming of the Oriental fairy tales in reefer-blazer, became another idol of the cult of the ball. The Nawab of Pataudi is one other Indian prophet in this totemistic fetish of the twentieth century.

But they are the princely prodigals who took the family portion and decamped. India gave them birth; she never gave them suck. There was a foreign splendour in their cricket as there

is in the spirituality of Krishnamurti. A little talent and much money made them into stalwart players. Initiated into the mysteries of the game in English schools, learning its lessons in English universities, coached by the best English professionals, and patronized by the worst snobs of the English aristocracy, their Indianism wore thin like cobweb gauze.

They would prefer the uncertain honour of hobnobbing half round the world with English professionals to the certain glory of playing for the country that gave them birth; the barracking of the backwoodsmen from the Australian bush to the happy smiles of well-governed subjects. If only they had spent one-fourth of the money and one-tenth of the energy in learning statecraft from Englishmen instead of sportsmanship, how much better statesmen and sportsmen they would have proved!

Here is one man who is flesh of Indian flesh and blood of Indian blood. He paid no bumper salaries to English sportsmen to build up his batting average. His cricket is home-spun and home-woven. He learnt to strike the ball as the born poet learnt to scan—without effort. His father, a friend of “Ranji”, taught him cricket. “Go,” he said, “and hit every bowler and on any wicket.” Dangerous advice. But the father knew his son. Cottari Kankaiya Nayudu’s cricket is in essence Indian, like Gandhi’s politics or Tagore’s lyrics. The game may be foreign, like imported bullion, but there is the impress of Hindustan on the coin.

Barring the politicians, who always receive ready-cash homage in the country, India leaves her great men to be discovered by foreigners.

The bragging voice of London or the thin whispers of Europe usually first declare the glories of worthy Indians, to which India, like the grandmother that she is, nods most knowingly, as if to say: "Didn't I tell you so?" As a matter of fact, unless a man comes back in a blaze of exotic glory he is like a needle in a haystack in India. Tagore himself was discovered by Yeats in London tramcars in which he read the MSS of *Gitanjali*. Dhyan Chand, the wizard of hockey who glides into goal like the cobra into its lair, was first hailed by the capitals of Europe. Raman and Bose, the scientists, Radhakrishnan, the philosopher, Uday Shankar, the dancer, Sarojini Naidu, the poetess—did they all not ascend the pinnacle of national glory by the backdoor of foreign print?

Nayudu stands with his bat at the wicket in lone splendour as almost the only man whom all India hailed with full-throated ease before Europeans had time to give tongue in his praise. And when glowing accounts of his doings by English critics of the game reached India when Nayudu first went to pile up over a thousand runs in one season for the Indian Gymkhana in London in 1932 and later in 1936 toured England with the Indian team, they were not thrilled like one who sees a star swimming into his ken helped on by the wings of foreign newsprint.

Nayudu has been on the map these last thirty years since he first played for the Hindus in the Bombay Quadrangular in 1916. When he sailed with the Indian team in 1936 he had already over ninety centuries to his credit in the books. He had played many brilliant innings, but the

best was perhaps against Arthur Gilligan's team at Bombay in 1926.

Earle had knocked up a century for the M. C. C. against the Hindus, playing cricket like fireworks and in all hitting eight 6's and eleven 4's. Such an innings had never been seen at the Bombay Esplanade before. Was there one in the Indian camp that could equal this feat?

Nayudu strode down the steps lightly patting his pads with the bat. And the tension grew in the vast crowd assembled there. The shadow of a bird of prey crossed the pitch.

And.....as though he had dipped his bat into Oriental black magic, dark, lanky Nayudu hit Tate, Geary, Astill and Bowes for eleven 6's and thirteen 4's — a feat never before surpassed at Bombay — and piled up a total of 153. Such a "piece de resistance" was never served to the popular palate. When Viceroy's Ordinances are clean forgotten the scene will linger in the memory of Indian sportsmen.

Great sportsmen, like noble steeds of high breed, put forth their best when matched against odds. It is when Greek meets Greek that they show themselves to the full stature of their inward genius.

Nayudu became so much a part of India that he almost lost his name, for the nation spelt it precisely as it pleased her — N-a-i-d-u. All over India he was known for quite a long time by a name that was really not his. The name became public property. And we wondered when we saw his signature in autograph books — C. K. Nayudu — why on earth he misspelt his own name!

In this new religion of the ball, it is difficult to find a votary without a little bluff and a good deal of bluster. One always associates with your sportsman a certain amount of false bravado and mock-heroics. They all have the wrestler's obtrusive expansion of the chest and the heavy hauteur demonstrative—all except Nayudu.

Meeting him for the first time a stranger will have to be an uncommon seer to guess that here is the hero of a hundred fights.

An officer of the Indore army and an A. D. C. to a Maharaja, as this high-priest of the bat really is, yet he has the outward demeanour of a travelling salesman of Swadeshi cosmetics.

Whenever I think of Nayudu I also think of a little tailor's shop at Indore, that wind-blown city of festive nights and gay-coloured turbans queening it over the Malwa plateau. It was not till old Mohammed—who called himself, rather pompously, "tailor-master"—had written down my measurements and slipped my advance into his vest-pocket that we were both aware of a dark, lanky man with an attractively haggard look studying the out-of-date fashion plates of women's attire on the once whitewashed walls. It was Nayudu waiting for his turn.

Once after Oscar Wilde, that bizarre genius, had been introduced to Mohini Mohun Chatterji, a cultured Bengali, he had gone up to the hostess and whispered in her ear: "I never realized before what a mistake we make in being white."

Oscar Wilde disliked the game of cricket—he thought the attitudes too indecent. If only he could have seen Nayudu in the field he might

have changed his ideas and muttered: "What a mistake it is to see Englishmen play cricket!"

Hobbs who said that Sutcliffe at his best had only a small variety of strokes said of Nayudu: "You have only to see him pick up a ball to know that he is the born cricketer."

Now that the Golden Jubilee of Nayudu has been celebrated all over India and he has been dropped out of the 1946 Indian Test Team to England, I don't know whether the cricketing world has turned its back on this great cricketer. But that he has yet plenty of thunder in him he showed when he almost carried the Holkar Team on his back, as it were, and made it the champion in 1946 by playing a double-century in the first innings and half a century in the second.

Inscrutable are the ways of the Indian Cricket Board. The man who might have led the 1946 Team has been dropped out of it. Is there an age-limit for first-class cricket? But there should be a limit to the princely purple that always dominates Indian cricket. If man is a Prince of a small state he seems to carry more weight than the king of a great game that Nayudu really is. This has always been so. When in 1936 Nayudu should have led the team a threepenny half-penny potentate who flirts with cricket was picked up as a figurehead. The Prince felt so ashamed of himself in England that he quietly dropped himself, and two other potentates to boot, from the team for the Test in England to enable the rightful heir to skipper the side. Money and not merit has decided the captaincy of the team whenever it has sailed out of India. It was as though a tinsel crown was a necessary qualification of being a cricket captain.

As justification for this attitude a whole saga of culumnies has been fabricated round the name of Nayudu. And sometimes he has been insulted more than ordinary mortals can bear. When Lord Tennyson's Team visited India in 1937 Nayudu was dropped from the Team after he had been invited and had actually arrived in Bombay to play under Merchant! But Nayudu treated this petty vindictiveness with pity. He made allowances. It was not cricket, true enough. But he took it in the cricketing spirit.

He comes from a family with cricket running in the blood. The father migrated to Nagpur from Madras, and played cricket with his sons as naturally as one would read books with the family. They also acted Shakespeare plays together. But it was cricket that won. There was once a Nayudu cricket team in Nagpur of which all the players came from the family. He learnt not only cricket but imbibed the spirit of cricket.

Here is the ideal captain of a team: with a sound knowledge of the game, a cool judgment, tact and natural ability to rise to any occasion. He doesn't fuss. He doesn't tear his hair. He doesn't slacken even a split second. He has enthusiasm. He has personality.

As an all-rounder, in spinning the ball, wielding the bat and picking up in the field, Nayudu is the greatest cricketer that India has produced, and produced all by herself.

All those who find a delight in the crisp crack of willow meeting leather, a thrill at the sight of a well-hit 'sixer' or a joy in a flying catch in the deep field, used to look forward to Nayudu's turn to bat. For he is the darling of the crowd

all over India. With unholy sympathy and philanthropic tolerance, the Indian crowds are mostly indifferent which side wins. They owe homage to only one man: That man is Nayudu.

At some uneasy stage of the game—usually at the fall of the first or the second wicket—Nayudu enters the arena as a beautiful thought enters the mind. And when he begins to play it is as though a beautiful thought is merely finding natural expression.

Nayudu at his best has the spontaneity and ease of the inspired artist, the elegance and rhythm of the born poet and the wayward nonchalance of the superb spendthrift.

The game of cricket, as played by some of its best exponents, has one correct stroke for each particular ball, few variations in the style of striking; and on the whole, the method is to stick to the wicket like glue and let the score mount up one by one, or two by two, as occasion demands. Cricket to such men is a kind of mathematics. You are not sorry you go to see these clockwork of figures at play. But you are glad to get away. Your sense of disappointment becomes pathetic when you realize that there is nothing to find fault with. Orthodox cricket in the best English tradition is very correct but frightfully dull.

On the other hand, to be original in cricket is the easiest thing imaginable next to losing one's temper. You take off your coat and hand it over to your cousin; spit on your hands; and brandish the bat with the same terrific magnificence at each ball; and away the ball will go north and south, east and west and bang into the zenith!

As the great writer embalms in amber what has long lost the sap of life, the great cricketer, while not being absurdly unconventional, varies the customary strokes into something rich and strange. He adds lustre where there was only life; colour where there was mere correctness. There is what might be called personality in cricket—vivid, graphic, lively, quivering. And Nayudu is the greatest exponent of this indefinable, irresistible, alluring waywardness of genius we can find in India. There is always a sense of colour in his cricket, an extravagant glitter of burnished gold in his strokes.

Yet one can easily see that cricket is only a pastime with him—not a business. He plays it with the zeal and enthusiasm of the greatest amateur the world has ever known—the schoolboy.

Thus there is with him a certain uncertainty, a strange caprice—like the spirit of India itself. His play is like an Indian tune set to cricket. With his damascene wrists he gives expression to the capricious splendours of the wayward spirit of India in sudden rainbow curves of overboundaries and the magic artistry of unexpected carpet drives.

He seems to carry an enchanted blade that often sends what looks like an unplayable ball beyond the ropes in a flash while he stands without any posing as if nothing in the world had happened. The sheer unexpectedness and ease of his lusty hits makes one think of magic and wizardry and the charmed swords of ancient India.

Many are the battles that have been fought and left unconcluded as to the relative merits of Nayudu and many others as cricketers.

Undergraduate friendships in universities have been ruined and Bengali Baboos have nearly fought things out in the manner of Sohrab and Rustom.

When Nayudu comes to town and the antagonists watch him play, the unfriendly frowns melt and old foes shake hands with the smile of enlightenment.

Lalaji the banker, who drops in from the office to see Nayudu bat, begins to cheer uproariously, heartily, absent-mindedly, his melon-like paunch bobbing up and down.

And Sushila who has accompanied her brother to worship the idol becomes romantic and wishes that a tall dark man in white flannels would come to carry her away before it is too late.

G. Venkatachalam



It is a curious fact that a man is considered of no consequence if he is described as "harmless." As though a harmful man is one worthy of esteem. On the other hand it is true that when we describe a person as "harmless," we also mean him to be helpless as well or incapable of being helpful.

G. Venkatachalam is both harmless and helpful—and not helpless by a long chalk. Item, he is of great consequence for he belongs to a category of people who have made the colourblind see: Ananda Coomaraswamy, E. B. Havell, James Cousins, O. C. Gangoly, Percy Brown, N. C. Mehta, Stella Kramrisch. I am not quite clear where exactly in this list Venkatachalam's place is; but he has done as much as any one of these in making India art-conscious.

While we learned the finer points and the more intricate philosophy of Indian Art from men like Coomaraswamy and Havell we also learned to love Indian Art as something connected intimately with us from Venkatachalam. He gave us the personal details of the artists, created them into human beings of flesh and blood, as he showed us the subtle beauty of their delicate lines. He brought Indian Art nearer our bosoms. He brought it from the Gallery where it was reverently hung by the heavy critics into the drawing-room where we viewed it with a



G. VENKATACHALAM



WALPOLA RAHULA

good deal of friendly pleasure if not a certain amount of ecstasy.

He infused ease into aesthetics; personality into painters; and friendliness into frescoes. For his criticism always had a personal touch, an intimate interest, a winning warmth.

Often we disagreed with his estimates or appreciation. We might have even smiled in an abominably superior manner at his naive notes. But always we felt a certain kindness towards the man who could mix art with affection. We think of him as a popular uncle who arouses our childish interest by anecdotes that tickle our fancy.

Venkatachalam spurns the aloofness, the coldness, the impersonal pomposity associated with the more celebrated art critics, at the risk of not being taken seriously. As a matter of fact there are those whose noses get a little turned up when you mention Venkatachalam; but such noses would as well be cut off without spiting the face. For Venkatachalam is the man who by making art interesting, by giving it a personality that glows, really steals a march over the other critics whom we consider very important but extremely dull.

He is that kind of art critic who is the rarest of all creative artists, as rare as the great school-master. He is entirely different from the creative artist in that the great painter has a clearly defined view of the world that lives in his own mind, from which he draws inspiration and which controls him, whereas Venkatachalam has a mind which is so plastic that it can fit itself into the crannies and crevices of other minds, making them his own. He is sensitive to a high degree to the intentions of the artists.

Whatever his own standpoint he puts it aside, gets into their minds, takes for the nonce their view, adapts himself to their ideal that he may judge how far they have realized it.

To do this not only does he examine closely what the artist paints, but also how he paints it, where he paints it. He must pry into not only the background of the picture but also that of the man who painted it. To interpret a picture Venkatachalam must needs know what songs the artist sings and what friends he sups with. Like a great actor living the role he has to act, he gets under the skin of the artist and lives the life before trying to understand him and appreciate him. If he wishes to draw our attention to the Persian glories of Chughtai's work he travels all the way to Lahore, has Moghulai dinners with him, sees him at work and play, before he makes an estimate of his work. His criticism is, therefore, straight from the horse's mouth. There is no stale smell of the second-hand opinion about it. There is an honest freshness of a new discovery in what he writes or lectures on.

The result is his words are chock-full of enthusiasm. It may be said that Venkatachalam never wrote or talked about an artist without raving. The fact of the matter is he does not bother about an artist who is not worth raving about. Others he leaves well alone. His criticisms are all really appreciations, hymns of praise. It takes a long time for him to decide whether a man is worth taking notice of. And once he has hand-picked his artists, understood them by long association with them, become a friend of their families, he spares not his adjectives in spreading thinly over Asia the news of their genius.

Venkatachalam, as a writer, is eminently readable. He has a vigorous style and a brevity of expression. His pen-portraits of famous personalities have an infinite charm of their own, like the delicate lines of Nandalal Bose. His *Mirror of Indian Art*, *Travel Dairy of an Art Student*, *Fragrant Memories*, *Daughters of the Dawn*, *Contemporary Indian Painters* and *Dance in India* are books that one dips into every now and then. Once you begin reading them you just cannot help going on. His is a chatty, pleasant style that tires you not. You imagine him conversing with you, imagine him chuckling at the end of a paragraph and telling you all about it and about. When he speaks in public he has a polished self-assurance and a pleasantness that remind you of cut-glassware.

He is perhaps one of the most understanding souls you can meet in India. While he admires your virtues he does not mind your vices or weaknesses. Perhaps this explains why Venkatachalam draws friends towards him. He has a gift for making friends and he collects them as children collect postage-stamps. And they are his most precious of possessions. There is hardly a corner of India where he has not hidden a friend. Like a miser who hoards gold he saves up friends, and I like to imagine him counting them one by one of an evening and gloating over them.

There is as much background to the personality of Venkatachalam as there is to any picture he writes about.

He learnt to understand art not from books and illustrations but direct—from artists themselves, from original works of art and

monuments in India, China, Java, Japan and Lanka, from learned critics like Ananda Coomaraswamy and Stella Kramrisch, from enthusiasts like James Cousins. Their warm enthusiasm he has imbibed as a writer, lecturer and connoisseur. From Mrs. Besant Venkatachalam learnt impersonal service to the nation; from Krishna-murti he learnt the cult of happiness as life's mission and also of being aesthetic in person; and from his intuitive experiences his criticisms of art and life.

He is a citizen of all India without the slightest trace of provincialism, unlike many a celebrated figure. When you meet him you would never guess he is a Tamil. In him all the best culture of the whole country blends to make up a polished personality that has no unrounded corners. He literally lives throughout the land. In Bombay for a month, in Calcutta for two, in Mysore for six and in Madras for a week, he lives an enviable roving, rolling, carefree, bachelor life with the whole of India as his horizon and all the provinces as his home.

When he visits a place he begins to know it as his palm in a few days. He studies men as well as he studies art and is as shrewd a judge of them.

He has travelled widely in Japan, Java, China, Korea and Ceylon carrying the gospel of Indian Art to distant corners of Asia.

But no other country outside India does he know as much as Ceylon, where he seems to know all those worth knowing. I have watched, spell-bound at his genius for making friends, the plastic understanding mind of the ideal art critic fitting itself to strangers at lightning

speed, on his visits to Ceylon. Today he will meet a man for the first time. In half an hour's conversation he does the trick. Tomorrow the man will call for him and whisk him away in his car. In two days he will call the stranger by a pet name and a great time they will have while I look on amazed at the way he has with friends. He is one of the most popular Indians who have ever visited Ceylon.

Without any official status Venkatachalam has been, for the last two decades, doing a good deal of ambassadorial work between India and Ceylon during his many visits to the Island. What would not this cultural crusader achieve if he were sent as the real Representative under the direction of a man like Nehru!

With the regeneration of Lanka taking place everywhere she is looking more and more towards India as a cultural and spiritual mother. The great interest in Indian Art, Dancing, Philosophy shown by the young generation is evidence of this.

But there are no facilities for study and enjoyment of these pleasures and delights. The Government of Ceylon gives a certain number of scholarships to students to study in India. But that does not take us very far.

If only there were a Representative of India in Ceylon who knew Indian culture and the Ceylon people as well as Govindraj Venkatachalam, what capital he could make of a situation like this!

Today the office of the Indian Representative looks more like an undertaker's than a nation's Embassy. Venkatachalam could turn it into a

Temple of Indian Art that would attract thousands who would go there on pilgrimage. I like to visualize him as an Ambassador doing his political work through cultural work, bringing the two nations together without their knowing about it.

It is a man who can create a miniature India in the heart of commercial Colombo full of the heritage of culture that the land is heir to, showing in pictures the pageantry of the princes, the pleasures of the peasant, the panorama of art, the delight of dancing, the beauty of age-old architecture and the modern wealth of wares to sell, that we require in Ceylon. He should know also methods of propaganda and how to present India to Ceylon.

Although Art has been his absorbing interest in his life he has an insight into political problems that astounds you. Ten years ago he foresaw what would happen in Ceylon now. His estimate of and prediction about Mr. S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike when he started the Sinhala Maha Sabha has proved true. Later he foretold that Sir Baron Jayatilaka would be a back-number and it would be Mr. D. S. Senanayake who would rule Ceylon. He also said that Senanayake was an out and out Fascist in all but name. Not so long ago he also laughed at Mr. J. R. Jayewardene's mock heroics of defying Senanayake. Give him time, he said, and Jayewardene would be Senanayake's creature for the mere asking.

A better friend of the Ceylonese people, knowing their virtues and weaknesses, you cannot get in the whole of India than Venkatachalam. He knows the Ceylon mind. He knows how to appeal to it.

He has always had an ambassadorial air about him. Dignified in carriage, with a paunch that adds a touch of respectability to his person, he is a shrewd judge of character and people. But he never speaks out his mind if what he has to say is unpleasant. Not that when the occasion arises he cannot be courageous enough to voice his feelings if it serves any purpose.

He is withal a lover of all good things, beautiful things, pleasant people. He is the born connoisseur. While he loves the good things of life — comfort, clothes, art, music, books — with a passion, he hates discomfort of any sort. There is a streak of the selfish in him which always puts himself first in all matters. He likes other people: but he loves best of all, and has the most consideration for Venkatachalam himself.

It is because of this inability to give up things he likes that Venkatachalam has always remained a roving cultural ambassador only. If during the great crisis of Indian national life he had had the courage to sacrifice comfort and march breast forward shoulder to shoulder with his other friends like Kamaladevi and Jawaharlal he would today be a big noise in India. At great moments he has drawn himself into a shell, folded his hands and justified himself with criticisms of individual Congress leaders to ease his conscience.

Although the flesh may not have been willing there was no weakness of spirit. He is one with the great ideals of the National Congress heart and soul.

It is as well Venkatachalam avoided the hard road of political asceticism and self-sacrifice. For he is today all the better fitted for responsible

work. If his spirit had broken down under the strain, as it might have, India might have lost a future ornament in the diplomatic service.

Every now and then in his life Venkatachalam has had an all-consuming tenderness to help a "lame duck." When this fit is on "self" almost disappears. Night and day he will strive, work, fight and labour in the cause of the lame duck. There is hardly anything he will not sacrifice for the person he has taken under his wing. At any cost he will create a new personality out of clay. As a result I can count at least three or four persons who have become great actresses and dancers, painters or politicians because of the self-sacrifice of Venkatachalam, helped by the momentum of his propaganda methods.

The last "lame duck" is on her own feet now. Venkatachalam has finished writing his books. He knows all the Indian Art he cares to know.

His next passion should be India herself. I know he will be as devoted and as self-sacrificing *in her cause if only the Government will have the imagination to use this ready-made ambassador who could be slipped on to Ceylon with the ease of a fastened zipp.* Will he rust unused or shine burnished with use? Who can tell?

Walpola Rahula



BHIKKU Walpola Rahula has become a name in Ceylon. They talk of him everywhere, not excepting the reticent Orient Club. Children, who have overheard their elders, think he is some kind of monster who will eat them up if they are not careful.

Recently when he visited a temple in the Mirigama area, the inmates were amazed by him. With a fire-away look of resignation in their eyes, they had been prepared to meet a ferocious, burly ruffian in yellow robes throwing his immense weight about, threatening everybody in general, and hurling curses and the choicest bits of furniture all over the place by sheer force of habit.

Instead there arrived a mild-mannered monk, precise as a dictionary definition, thin as a slice of bacon, with thick lenses on his nose, a nervous, shy smile on his lips and winning words on his tongue with which he put everybody at ease in a minute. The old monks were so amazed that they inquired: "Is this really Rahula Sthavira?"

The flood-gates of the black magic of news-print opened against him culminated some time ago in the full issue of a weekly Sinhalese paper of U. N. P. being entirely devoted to him, attacking him in picturesque prose and violent verse in turn, sometimes breaking out into comic songs of hate at moments of emotional crisis.

The spate of platform propaganda let loose culminated recently at the Town Hall when the occasion assumed the mighty proportions of the opening of a bus station, several personages, with minds like water-bugs skating on the surface, falling over the usual queue of Ministers of State, raging with Maitri, in a rush to open their artillery full out against this feeble friar.

If we are to believe all these angry editors, ferocious poets and outraged orators, Bhikku Rahula is Rasputin, Al Capone and Angulimala all rolled into one.

If the amount of bitterness of criticism is any criterion of the importance of a person, Bhikku Rahula has nothing to wish for, except perhaps a cartoon by Colette depicting him as the monster-monk of popular fancy.

That is one side of the picture. The other side is equally interesting, if not funny.

Bhikku Rahula's followers believe he is a man in a million, a man with a mission, arisen to preach to the misguided Buddhist, to reform the Sangha, to clean up the country and save the religion. He is a new inspiration. They look up to him as a scholar, an organiser, a planner, a preacher, a debater, a writer and their champion.

They come from long distances to speak a few words with him. They wait for long hours, sometime in long queues; they ask for orders. He is, as far as they are concerned, in a niche next to Weliwita Saranankara and Mohottiwatte Gunananda, the great monk reformers of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Devotees come on pilgrimage to see his room; he is almost an oracle in spectacles. Lifelong friendships have been severed over him.

It looks as though Buddhist Ceylon is divided into two camps—pro-Rahula and anti-Rahula. No one person has divided the country into two as has this monk from Walpola.

The voice of this Bhikku has begun to challenge Ceylon's mightiest political boss, Mr. D. S. Senanayake, and his close coterie of office-loving friends. Old monks with their disciples have become his followers. Politically experienced and radically-minded politicians are supporting the stand he is taking.

His thesis is that Ceylon's future salvation lies in federation with India politically. At the Indo-Ceylon Cultural Conference held recently in Colombo, he declared: "At a time when even a hundred percent Indian like Mr. Jinnah has denied that he is an Indian, I stand before you to proclaim that we Sinhalese and Tamils in this Island are blood of the Indian blood, flesh of the Indian flesh." He was contemptuous of the played-out politicians who were ashamed to own India as the Mother and looked 6000 miles away for political tutelage. And he attributed this tendency to subtle British propaganda and influence that has worked for 130 years to wean Ceylon from India for imperialistic purposes: the same kind of influence that had made Mr. Jinnah deny his own nationality.

Bhikku Rahula is a monk, whose career will be interesting to watch. A young man of thirty-five, an Honours graduate of London University, sometime student of Calcutta University, he is as great a scholar in Pali, the ancient tongue in which the Dhamma is written, as he is a student of English or of Economics or History or Politics.

Bhikku Rahula wants a new deal for the poor man in Ceylon. That can never happen in the Island as long as the present clique of politicians are in power, says he. They are a selfish lot, who compromise on fundamental things like independence as long as they are given high offices. For Ceylon to get on her feet and get into closer touch with India, the present regime must go and independence must come.

In Bhikku Rahula the young Buddhist monk, Lanka is finding a new leader. He is inspired by the vision of a new Asia with nations hitherto disrupted living together in peace and amity. Thousands now hearken to his call. To the present ruling clique he is a problem and a menace.

For the past months Ceylon has had one burning topic. This is whether Buddhist monks should take part in politics. Much heat has been generated, many millions of words spoken, and many friendships broken over this issue. Orthodox bourgeois Buddhists and capitalist political bosses, afraid of the influence of Buddhist monks, who might expose their politics, have tried to treat priests as untouchables of a rare new kind, by prohibiting them from entering councils and doing social work or spreading ideas of economic justice among the poorer classes. Laymen have attempted to show monks that the rules of the Bhikkus did not allow them to do political work or even to cast their votes. That should be allowed to laymen only.

Bhikku Rahula's voice was first raised against this denial of civic rights allowed even to Harijans in India. He saw no rule, no law in the doctrine of the Buddha to prohibit monks working

for the masses. If anything, it was the bounden duty of the monk to expose the coterie of selfish men selling their birthright of Independence for a few high offices in order to batten on the ignorance of the masses, who were not politically conscious.

Bhikku Rahula seemed to be a lone voice crying in the wilderness to begin with. But, today, he has a vast underground following of some thousands, who are spreading the new teaching in the villages. His attacks on the parochially colossal figure of Mr. D. S. Senanayake, the leader of the State Council and chief supporter of the reforms, has thrilled the multitudes, the socialists and Senanayake's jealous rivals who feared him though they did not like him. Now hardly a day passes without the anti-Senanayake clamour being raised on platforms, in Sinhalese weekly papers and even by versifiers of great poetic charm.

Hitherto the Buddhist monk has been a timid creature confined to his temple and exploited by designing politicians at election time for their own purposes. Denied modern education, cut off from the life of the people, he was a pitiful specimen. Bhikku Rahula's bold stand for not only the monk's right but also for the masses' right has put heart into some 30,000 monks in Ceylon. Bhikku Rahula has become a problem, a thorn in the side of entrenched reactionary elements.

Bhikku Rahula has forsaken his thesis that he was writing for his doctorate in philosophy. More important matters are calling him from his monastic cell at the Vidyalandara Pirivena, the most progressive seminary for monks in Ceylon: the loud cry of hungry people, the sinister

whisper of discontent, the helpless moan of the oppressed.

His room at the suburban seminary is a simple long room but every little thing in it was spotlessly clean. The long hard divan spread over with an Indian cloth with bold stripes was stacked with larged well-thumbed books neatly arranged. On the wall was an original picture by Nandalal Bose showing the Buddha attending on a sick monk. The great artist is a friend of Bhikku Rahula and painted this picture specially for him.

He is thorough in all he does, methodical and systematic. While he unfolded his plans, I wondered whether this monk would one day be able to undo the work done by a generation of Sinhalese politicians and a century of British imperialism. But Bhikku Rahula is an inveterate optimist. He seems to be of the stuff of which heroes are made.

The fame of this priest with the prominent collar bone and Adam's apple has seeped out of this Island and spread thinly over Buddhist Asia—China, Burma, and Siam: In India he has become hot news. The *Sunday Times* of Madras on May 26th, 1946 wrote of him a lengthy article on the front page with a banner six-column headline in thick type—"Buddist Monks Rise in Revolt in Ceylon." *Mysindia* (Bangalore) in its issue of June 2nd 1946 published a full page character sketch entitled "Bhikku Walpola" complete with photograph. The *Bombay Chronicle* (Bombay) hailed him as a "Modern Savonarola of Ceylon" in the course of a four column article. The *Orient Illustrated Weekly* (Calcutta) of December 12, 1946 went into minute details of his way of life

in the course of a four-column article. The *Free Press Journal* (Bombay) in early April 1947 published a long interview with him on the Ceylon Reforms.

No one has been taken by surprise by this sudden fame as Bhikku Rahula himself. He is as much amused as anybody else by both the pictures of heretic and hero, renegade and reformer. For he has a keen sense of humour.

Once Bhukku Rahula was having an argument with a well-known person who at every turn would say: "You are mistaken." The discussion dragged on for a long time until some remark of the monk cut the well-known person to the quick and made him ask: "Sir, do you think I am an absolute fool?"

"Why no," returned Bhikku Rahula. Then with a wink in his eye, added: "But then, I may be mistaken."

Bhikku Ananda Sagara, another stalwart of the Political Bhikku campaign, relates a story of how Rahula Thero, while preaching at a Colombo temple, held forth on the monstrosity of certain monks amassing wealth by selling the religion without doing anything for Buddhism or the country. Evidently the thrust went home. One of inmates of the temple was so enraged that in the presence of the whole congregation he shouted: "If our High Priest were well enough he would have broken your head!"

Undismayed Bhukku Rahula replied with a kindly smile: "Even at the risk of my head, I wish the High Priest better health."

On another occasion a popular political figure expressed surprise to see such a dense crowd to welcome Bhikku Rahula who, when called upon to speak, started with the remark: "I do not think you are as dense as my friend takes you for."

This sense of humour prevents his taking himself too seriously, even when his name is bruited abroad, and he can laugh at himself as heartily as he can at his detractors and admirers.

How did Bhikku Rahula become something to write home about all of sudden? What is the secret of the heroic glamour or the monstrous notoriety associated with him? The secret of his power is elusive. It is not in his speaking, which has a firm disciplined tread without wings or vapour, strong in argument and often racy in expression, but never calculated to take people off their feet. A pleasant voice, a friendly presence and an attractive personality in themselves cannot explain success so remarkable.

The sense of noble adventure that spurns comfortable living and dares ostracism in a cause near his heart, the sense of dedication and whole-heartedness and fearlessness of a rare type: these are qualities so far not associated with Buddhist monks grown fat with good living. And he has a sense of humanity too that even allows him to be friends with those who criticise him.

The monks follow him because he has infused a sense of purpose into their empty lives. He has raised the monk to the status of somebody of consequence.

The laymen adore him because he has the courage to express what they dare not lest they

lose their jobs or their business. As a matter of fact Bhikku Rahula says that it is the duty of the monk to expose wrong statecraft, for laymen are helpless victims of their livelihood. He who raises his voice will by his voice fall, for the present political bosses after 15 years of power are all-powerful.

In spite of all these, Bhikku Rahula might at best have become an eight day wonder, a mere fad; something that goes in at one ear and out at the other. And nobody would have bothered about him.

But it was the Vidyalandara Pirivena, the famous old monastery, that gave the airy nothing called Rahula a habitation and a name. Its support gave him a status. Its taking up his cause against overwhelming odds gave him an air of seriousness of purpose. Every day people expected the Vidyalandara Pirivena to throw him overboard rather than lose in popularity and prosperity. But it stuck by him. The greatest episode in Bhikku Rahula's life is this winning over the veteran monastery associated with great learning, piety and discipline.

Bhikku Rahula is looked up to as a new kind of missionary come to reconvert the "heathen" among the Buddhists, and his opponents misguided barbarians who might any day destroy him.

"Missionaries, my dear?" said Oscar Wilde once. "Don't you realise that missionaries are divinely provided food for destitute and underfed cannibals? Whenever cannibals are on the brink of starvation Heaven in its infinite mercy sends them a nice plump missionary."

If Bhikku Rahula is a missionary that seems to be his position — except that the wrong person is plump here. You cannot imagine Ceylon politicians as “destitute and underfed”, even if you can think of them as cannibals.

But it would be wise, as they have found, to make the underfed “missionary” into a fire-breathing monster in yellow robes throwing about curses and the furniture, before they take advantage and make political capital punishment out of what Heaven has sent in its infinite mercy.

